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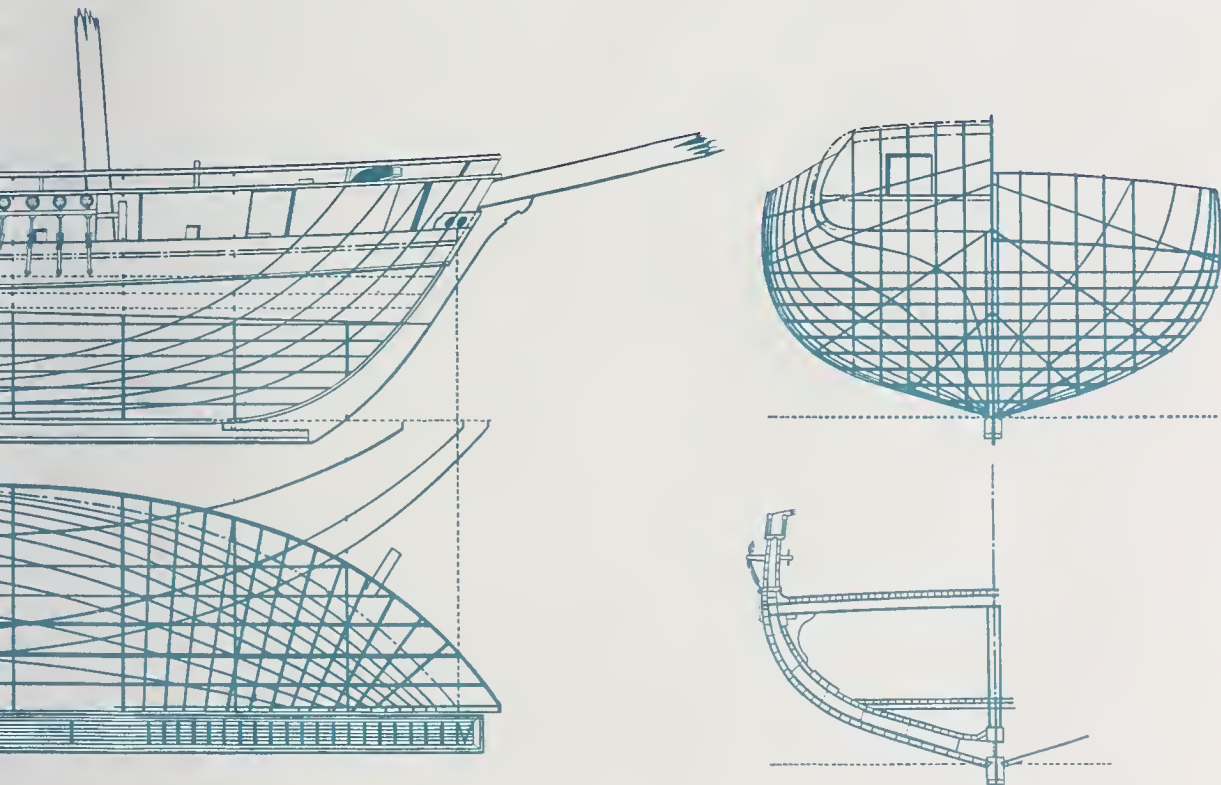
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# The Building of Perry's Fleet on Lake Erie 1812-1813

By Max Rosenberg



Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission







Daniel Dobbins

THE BUILDING  
OF  
PERRY'S FLEET  
ON  
LAKE ERIE, 1812—1813

By MAX ROSENBERG

•

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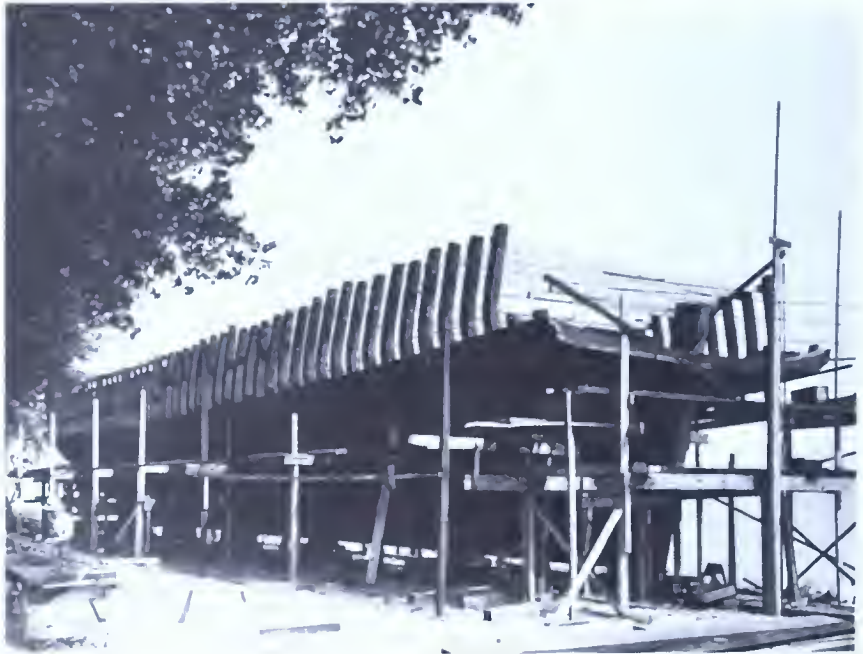
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This shaft of granite, rising 352 feet above South Bass Island, on Lake Erie in Ohio, commemorates Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry's naval victory against a British fleet in September of 1813. The American fleet, under Perry's command, waited in the harbor of South Bass until their adversaries, commanded by Captain Robert H. Barclay, left their base at Fort Malden (Amherstburg, Ontario) and sailed into the lake. The battle took place about ten miles west-northwest of the island. The memorial was completed in 1915 to commemorate the centennial of Perry's triumph. It is now the focal point of Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial National Monument, a twenty-acre park administered by the National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior.

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To celebrate the centennial in 1913 of the Battle of Lake Erie, the remains of Commodore Perry's second flagship, the *Niogara*, were pulled from Misery Bay, at Erie. The timbers of the keel were well preserved, and, though no detailed plans of the original ship were available, they were incorporated into a reconstructed *Niogara*. The photograph at the top shows the brig rebuilt. The bottom photograph shows a second rebuilding, which became necessary in 1933 due to decay. The ship is maintained as a historic property at Erie by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

## PREFACE

With each ensuing major war in which the United States has participated, the logistical problems have become more complex. In its broadest form the term logistics signifies the total process by which the resources of a nation—material and human—are mobilized and directed toward the accomplishment of a military end.<sup>1</sup>

This paper is an attempt to record an important operation during the War of 1812 with this view in mind. Numerous biographies have been written on the life of Oliver Hazard Perry, and the Battle of Lake Erie has been studied in the most minute detail as to the tactics and naval strategy employed. However, so far as is known, no one has made a study on the phase which was perhaps the most important to the success of the American plans in the Lake Erie area. That phase is the construction of the fleet. It is this particular part of the campaign upon which the emphasis has been placed—how the fleet was built. All contributing factors have been considered. They include the state of society within the area, its urban centers, its industrial facilities, and its transportation and communications development; where the workmen were obtained and how they were transported to the scene of building; the costs involved in the construction; and the leaders who directed the work. It is, I hope, a complete treatment of the building of the fleet.

Although many authors have covered one or more of the above-mentioned points, it has been done only as an incidental addition to their particular subject. None are without error of some kind—of dates, of orders, of sites, or of some other facts. Therefore, I have made extensive use of footnotes to substantiate statements which differ from other publications or for hitherto unpublished material.

For the subject matter, research was done at many libraries. Grateful acknowledgment is now made to the librarians and their assistants for their kind cooperation. These include those at the Public Library and the Western Reserve Historical Society Library in Cleveland;

the Public Library, the Grosvenor Library in Buffalo, and the library of the Buffalo Historical Society; the Erie Public Library and the library of the Erie County Historical Society; the library of the Crawford County Historical Society; the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh and the library of the Western Pennsylvania Historical Society; the National Archives and the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C.; the United States Naval Academy Library in Annapolis; the University of Pennsylvania Library in Philadelphia; and the E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company Hall of Records in Wilmington.

To Professor John W. Oliver, of the University of Pittsburgh, a deep sense of gratitude is felt. Throughout, Doctor Oliver continually advised, assisted, and helped plan the thesis. In addition, a warm appreciation is acknowledged for the opening of new vistas of interpretation in the field of American history, for which he was primarily responsible during one and a half years study under his tutelage.

To Miss Gertrude E. King, humble thanks is given for reading the original draft and for making many helpful corrections and changes.

MAX ROSENBERG

*The Building of Perry's Fleet on Lake Erie, 1812-1813* has been republished through the co-operation of the Eastern Park & Monument Association, Put-in-Bay, Ohio. The text is the original with minor changes, the most important being the correction of three misprinted dates and new photographs. The illustration on the cover is an architect's drawing for the reconstructed Flagship *Niagara* (see page vi).

Harold L. Myers  
Chief, Editorial Section

## I.

### WHY THE FLEET WAS BUILT

It has been claimed that Benjamin Franklin, upon hearing of the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, remarked that the Revolutionary War was over—but that the real war for independence was yet to be fought. Although Franklin did not live to see the fulfillment of his prophecy, it did become a reality with the War of 1812. This war involved the original adversaries, Great Britain and the United States, but the issue was more than the struggle of two nations. It made known to the world at large that the United States regarded herself as free and sovereign and as a nation which must be treated and respected as such. The war, once and for all, established American independence beyond all doubt.

The causes of the War of 1812 are complicated, but it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss them at great length. Needless to say, the war was begun after some twenty years of conspiracies, plottings, bickerings, and insults among Great Britain, France and the United States. Unfortunately, the latter was almost inevitably the heaviest loser in all these schemings.

The formulation of a solution to this state of continual crisis was begun with the election of 1810. Some seventy new members led by young, brash and daring men, were swept into Congressional office. Soon these were to bear the sobriquet of "The War Hawks." None had reached forty years of age, and some were not yet thirty. These men, who were to lead the fateful Twelfth Congress, included Henry Clay of Kentucky, William Lowndes, John C. Calhoun, David R. Williams, and Langdon Cheves of South Carolina, Felix Grundy of Tennessee, Peter B. Porter of New York, and Richard M. Johnson of Kentucky. They swept all opposition before them. Henry Clay, serving his first term, was chosen Speaker of the House, a position of infinitely more power than his successors hold today. To the important committees Clay appointed his cohort—Porter, Calhoun, and Grundy on Foreign Relations; Williams on Military Affairs; Cheves on Naval Affairs; and Ezekiel Bacon and Cheves on Ways and Means.

Who were these men who took up the cause of American honor, who sought confirmation for their rallying cry of "Free Trade and

Sailors' Rights!'"? They were the personification of the new generation of Americans found beyond the Appalachians and on the edge of the frontier who, for the first time, were making their voices heard in the conduct of our nation's policies.

The war sentiment was fostered mainly by the South and West, sections of the country which, while crying "Free Trade and Sailors' Rights!", had neither ships nor sailors. Strangely, New England, center for both the ships and the sailors, was most vehement in the opposition to a declaration of war. Logically, therefore, one must look elsewhere for other motivating factors. They were present in the western lands and the Indian problem. It was not so much that seamen wanted freedom of the seas, as that the frontiersmen wanted free land, which could be obtained only at the expense of the Indians, the British Empire, and Spain.

The West was beginning to feel crowded in 1812. The hunter and the pioneer farmer who forged the advances on the frontier found, or at least thought, their progress was impeded. The hunter opened new paths into the virgin lands. The pioneer farmer, following closely behind, cleared the land, quickly exhausted the soil, and moved on. They were followed by the true immigrant settler who bought the land and stayed. Thus, by 1812, Tennessee, Kentucky, and much of Ohio and Indiana were permanently settled. The hunter and the pioneer farmer could go no farther. True, there was much land to the west, virgin and unsettled, but the hunter and the pioneer farmer nonetheless considered themselves blocked, since it was not forest land.

The pioneer of 1812 was a woodsman. His need of timber was great, for it was essential for building, fencing, and fuel. Illinois, Indiana, and the trans-Mississippi regions were regarded as useless, since they were prairie lands. Moreover, much of these lands was controlled by powerful tribes of Indians. Hence the land-hungry pioneers turned longingly to the forest lands still held by redskins in upper Illinois and Indiana, and to the Upper Canada regions along Lakes Huron, Erie, and Ontario, which were under British domination. A similar situation prevailed in the South where the Spanish and Indian lands in Florida, along the Gulf of Mexico and even as far distant as Texas were coveted.

The result was continual strife with the Indians. Slowly, but steadily, the redman was pushed back and his holdings taken along a broad stretch from Ohio to Illinois. The retreat was forced—by killings, by connivings, by oratory, and by whiskey. In the period between 1795 and 1809, the Indians parted with approximately forty-eight million acres.<sup>1</sup>

Then came a halt to this process. Tecumseh and the Prophet undertook a reform movement among the Indians. It was a reformation of sweeping scope. Morality, habits, religion did not escape their attention. The result was a powerful confederation. Fearing further growth and power, General William Henry Harrison, with the tacit approval of the War Department, forced hostilities upon them. On November 8, 1811, the Indians were defeated at Tippecanoe.

The West, as a whole, believed that Britain was behind Tecumseh's confederacy. Undoubtedly, the British approved of the Indian organization; but, on the other hand, it is doubtful that support went much beyond this approval.<sup>2</sup> However, people like to hear what they want to hear. This human weakness, strengthened by the desire for those fertile lands beyond the lakes, branded the British guilty along with the Indians. The West, thereby, profoundly believed that its safety could be insured only by the destruction of the British and Indian holdings.

In June of 1812, the War Hawks, motivated primarily by the desire for the Indian and British lands, and using the popular slogan about the seas and the psychological device of respect for American integrity, demanded, and received, from President Madison a message requesting that a state of war be declared between the United States and the United Kingdom. The vote was 79 to 49 in the House; 19 to 13 in the Senate. On June 18, 1812, war was declared.

Congress adjourned on July 6 without voting war taxes or providing for any increase of the navy. A short war was expected; a rapid advance would be made into Canada where the inhabitants would welcome the American forces with open arms.<sup>3</sup>

The United States has entered into a number of wars in its one hundred and sixty years as a nation. For none of these has she been prepared. And never was the United States less prepared than for the War of 1812. The army had been authorized a strength of fifty thousand by Congress in January, 1812; but, enlistments being few, it numbered less than ten thousand regulars and volunteers when the declaration of war came.<sup>4</sup> The navy, which had been neglected by Jefferson and Madison, consisted of sixteen frigates, corvettes, brigs and sloops, and one hundred and sixty-five gunboats.<sup>5</sup> The gunboats had only one gun apiece and were virtually useless as weapons of war. Madison had few trained officers to select from the regular army. Appointments, by necessity, had to be made from outside its ranks.

American strategy, if it can be called such, was to sweep into Canada from the Niagara-Lake Ontario frontier and the Detroit-Lake Erie frontier. To carry out these plans Madison chose men who had had some war experience—thirty years previously! For the New York area, Henry Dearborn, deputy quartermaster-general in the War of Independence, was chosen. For the other area, William Hull was given command. Neither they nor the others appointed belonged to the regular service or had ever commanded a regiment in the face of an enemy. All were sixty years of age or thereabouts. The visions of success from that view should have looked dim indeed, especially in view of the fact that an able professional soldier, Isaac Brock, commanded the British forces.

William Hull had been Governor of the Michigan Territory since 1805. In February, 1812, he was called to Washington for consultation in regard to the coming war. Through the month of March, discussions were held and plans made. On April 8, 1812, Hull was put in charge of military operations on the Detroit-Lake Erie frontier.<sup>6</sup> It was with reluctance that he accepted, for he much preferred to remain in his civil post. During these discussions Hull had suggested the necessity of a naval force upon the Upper Lakes (Erie and Huron). General Hull foresaw the importance of such a force. The area along the southern shore of Lake Erie was unsettled, marked by paths instead of roads, and infested with unfriendly Indians. At the far end of this territory was Detroit, designated as the center of operations for the conquest. To keep up a sufficient army would require many reinforcements and many supplies. Only the lake afforded the means to cope with these problems of logistics. Great Britain, similarly, would be hampered by the long distances through unsettled land and over unimproved roads. Thus it was realized that control of Lake Erie would be a decisive factor in the success or failure of either of the adversaries.

At the time, American naval strength on the Upper Lakes consisted of one armed vessel, the *Adams*, and it was under the War Department jurisdiction. Unfortunately for himself and for the country, Hull did not adhere firmly to his views. It was finally agreed upon by Madison, Hull, and Secretary of War Eustis that it would be inexpedient to embark upon a shipbuilding program; that success would be achieved by a rapid advance into Canadian territory, thereby necessitating the surrender of the British Fleet upon the lake waters.<sup>7</sup>

May 25, 1812, found Hull assuming command of the militia assembled at Dayton, Ohio. One week later the march for Detroit was begun. It was to be an arduous trek of some two hundred miles, for

most of the route was through unfriendly Indian territory. To add to the hardships, a road had to be cut and improved as the troops advanced. Nor was this all. The section around the Maumee River was swamps and marshes (The Black Swamp) and most unpleasant for foot troops. In three weeks, the army had pushed its way only seventy-five miles northward.

On June 26, definite word of the declaration of war reached Hull.<sup>8</sup> It was decided that the heavy camp equipage be left behind, and the two thousand men hurried forward as rapidly as possible. The mouth of the Maumee River was reached four days later. Here Hull committed an unpardonable blunder. To save transportation, he loaded his personal baggage, hospital stores, entrenching tools, and a trunk containing his instructions and the muster-rolls of the army upon an unarmed schooner and dispatched it to Detroit. Hull thought that the British could not be in possession of the news about the war declaration and therefore, that the shipment would not be in danger. However, by June 30, the information had reached Malden where the British forces were quartered. The schooner left July 1; the next day an armed British naval vessel captured it. Invaluable information was in enemy hands and incalculable harm was rendered the American forces. This was the first of many blunders that marred the campaign and gave Great Britain the initial successes.

By July 5, General Hull had arrived in Detroit. Invasion preparations were completed, and the Detroit River was crossed on July 12, 1812. The British forces, numerically inferior, fell back before the advancing Americans until they had reached the safety of Malden. However, much to Hull's amazement and chagrin, the population did not meet the Americans with open arms and friendly greetings. This required pause for thought, and the advance was halted. The expected cordiality of the people was to have made possible, in a large measure, a successful campaign regardless of the long and overstretched communications lines. Since the welcome had been unfriendly, no alternative other than remaining in the present positions was possible until the eastern prong of the attack materialized. This attack was to emanate from the Buffalo sector.

However, the inefficient War Department had not carried out that portion of the plans. Thus, while Hull waited, the only force on the Niagara was a small group of state militia, without knowledge of Hull's expectations and without control from any United States Army officer. And General Dearborn did not even realize that the Niagara front was under his command.<sup>9</sup>

Hull continued to wait, each day growing more uncertain about his supplies, more anxious over his ever-growing sicklist, and more certain about his inability to capture Malden. On August 3, he was informed of the surrender of Mackinac; August 7, dispatches told of British reinforcements being rushed from Lake Ontario; August 8, Tecumseh routed an Ohio regiment near the Maumee River and captured the army mailbags. That evening, against the advice and wishes of militia Colonels Cass, Duncan, MacArthur and Findlay, Hull withdrew to Detroit.

Here began another week of fearful waiting. Each day the Indians grew more ferocious in their activities and Hull grew more anxious; and each day made him feel more cut off from his line of communications. His vacillating upon any program meant no progress. The militia was at the point of passive mutiny. The fear of Indian massacre, especially of the women and children, haunted Hull. He was an old man without the energy, brashness, or confidence of youth. His mind was filled with thoughts of horror, not of plans. His position, under the duress of his thinking, was untenable. On August 16, two companies of Michigan militia deserted. At that point, Hull gave up the mental struggle and determined to surrender. Without battle, Detroit fell. On the day previous, Fort Dearborn (Chicago) was also taken.

The last vestige of American authority on the western lakes and the surrounding area was gone. Instead of an easy conquest of Upper Canada, our frontier boundaries had been thrown back disastrously to the Wabash and the Maumee. Great doubt was felt whether even that line could be held against the incursions of the British and, especially, of the Indians.<sup>10</sup>

When the war was begun, the most northern American military post was located at Mackinac (Michilimackinac), a small island situated where the waters of Lake Michigan flow into Lake Huron. The garrison numbered fifty-four men and three officers, being about one-third the strength reported necessary for the peace-time establishment by Mr. Jefferson's Secretary of War in 1801! Not far distant, about forty miles away, the British maintained a post. It too was on an island, St. Joseph's, between Lake Superior and Lake Huron.

Immediately upon receipt of the declaration of war on June 28, General Brock, British Commander-in-Chief, dispatched a letter to St. Joseph's from Ft. George, near the Niagara River. It reached the post on July 15, 1812. Meanwhile, the American post had received no information whatsoever. The following day, Captain Charles

Roberts took about one thousand men, including 700 Indians, and by 3 A. M., July 17, had surrounded Mackinac. Lieutenant Porter Hanks could make but one decision. He surrendered his tiny and completely surprised garrison.

At the time of the surrender, there was an American merchant ship, the *Salina*, at anchor off Mackinac. It was captained by one Daniel Dobbins, a resident of Presque Isle (or Erie), who was there to pick up furs. Dobbins thought the surrender would mean the loss of his vessel, but Captain Roberts' terms of capitulation were of a most lenient nature. All soldiers were to be returned to the States on parole until such time as an exchange had been made; all merchant vessels were to remain in the possession of their respective owners; and all American citizens not taking an oath of allegiance to the British Crown were to "depart with their property from the island."<sup>11</sup>

Since provisions were scarce, the paroled soldiers and all citizens refusing to take the oath were ordered to leave the island aboard the *Salina* and another schooner, the *Mary*. They were to proceed to Cleveland, Ohio, for disembarkment. The ships came down Lake Huron and entered the St. Clair River (between Lakes Huron and Erie). Both shores, at the time, were in Hull's possession; so no trouble was encountered. Hull ordered them to shore and took command of the vessels. Without regard to the terms of the Mackinac surrender, the paroled prisoners of war were sent to the garrison, while the civilians were left to shift for themselves. All, of course, were recaptured two weeks later when Detroit fell.

Among the British officers at Detroit was a Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Nichols, whom Dobbins had known from pre-war days, both as a business friend and as a fellow Mason. From the Colonel, Dobbins solicited a pass which read:

Permit Daniel Dobbins and Rufus Seth Reed to pass  
from here to Cleveland on board of boats dispatched with  
Prisoners of War.

Detroit, August 17, 1812  
Robert Nichols, Lt.-Col.<sup>12</sup>

The story of the return to Cleveland can best be given by Dobbins himself.

On arriving at Malden, a gentleman named Boil, who lived at Malden, (that I was acquainted with) and was under suspicion by the British, but happened to be present when Major Muir gave the order to the Indians and others, and offering a reward for me, dead or alive. He [Boil]

being afraid to give the news himself called on a Mr. David Stone and told him to find me immediately. He came to me and told me. I then took shelter in an old sunken gun boat with but little more room in the Hold where I was than to keep my head out of Water. I remained there until dark, when I found a frenchman passing with his canoe. I hired him to put me on board the Schooner Thames where I knew Gen. Cass was. [Cass was charged with the task of getting the paroled prisoners of war to Cleveland.] I made my situation known to him. He called a Capt. Saunders, who commanded a Volunteer Company from Ohio. [Because] some of his men [were] sick and some wounded, they had given him a sail boat. He was glad of the assistance I could render him. We started immediately. (It afterwards appeared that a complaint had been entered against me for Breach of parole, the person having seen me under arms at Detroit). In this way I got safe to Cleveland. . . .<sup>13</sup>

Cleveland was reached on August 22. Captain Saunders then destroyed the boat in accordance with British instructions. Dobbins, however, was able to find a small sailboat and continued on, arriving at Erie on August 24.

Dobbins' news of the surrender of Detroit was the first that had reached Erie concerning that debacle. General David Meade, commander of the State militia for northwest Pennsylvania, immediately realized the gravity of the situation and requested Dobbins to make the journey to Washington and render a full report. Dobbins agreed to the general's wishes.

On the same day (August 24) that Dobbins landed at Erie, Cass reached Cleveland.<sup>14</sup> He, with a companion, set off for Washington after completing the disembarking of the paroled soldiers. On the 28th of August, Cass arrived at Pittsburgh.<sup>15</sup> He paused shortly, then continued on for the nation's capital. Upon reaching Mercersburg, a few miles north of Hagerstown, Maryland, Cass became ill with fever. It was at this place that Dobbins, on his way to Washington, passed Cass.<sup>16</sup>

Dobbins gave a full report at the Cabinet meeting held to discuss the events at Detroit. A few days later, when Cass had reached Washington, both were called in and questioned closely upon the disastrous happenings of the Upper Lakes region. The outcome was an agreement that a naval force that could command Lake Erie was the prime requisite for any future campaign to retake the lost territory and, once again, attempt a sweep into Canada.

On September 11, 1812, Dobbins received a note from the Secretary of the Navy, Paul Hamilton, requesting his presence at a conference. Dobbins was by far the most completely informed person in Washington concerning matters pertaining to Lake Erie.<sup>17</sup> At the conference, plans for a lake force were formulated. Dobbins named Erie as the best and only comparatively safe place for the fleet to be constructed. The Navy Department accepted this advice. Mr. Hamilton then gave Dobbins the following instructions:

You will proceed without delay to Presque Isle, on the Lake Erie, and there contract for on the best terms in your power, all the requisite timbers and other materials for building four gunboats agreeably to the dimensions which you will receive from Comm<sup>re</sup> Tingey; and if in your power you will contract for the building of those boats, but such contracts must be submitted to Comm<sup>re</sup> Chauncey, or the officer that may be appointed by him to command the naval forces on the Lake.

\* \* \* \*

To enable you to comply with the engagements you may make, you can draw on this Department for any sum not exceeding *Two Thousand Dollars*. Copies of all contracts you may make you will transmit to this Department.

For Paul Hamilton  
C. W. Goldsborough<sup>18</sup>

The following day, September 16, 1812, Mr. Dobbins received an appointment as sailing master in the United States Navy.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, the authorization was made for a fleet that was soon to bring world-wide fame to Oliver Hazard Perry and a glorious epic to the history of the United States.



The scene on the fighting deck of the reconstructed Flagship Niagara, at Erie, Pennsylvania. The brig carried into battle eighteen carranades, thirty-two-pound guns for clase-in fighting. The carranodes seen here were cast far the reconstruction in 1913. The two lang guns on the bow are twelve-paunders and date from the time of the battle. On the deck below are the quarters of the officers and men, the dispensary, boatswain's storeroom, gunner's stareraam, and other facilities.

## II.

### THE LAKE ERIE FRONTIER

Captain Dobbins' orders called for the construction of four gunboats. This later was increased by a further order for two brigs. In the present day, that does not seem very impressive. In World War II, many more than four gunboats were built at Erie. Any one of them outweighed the combined total of the 1813 fleet. It would seem that the Perry ships should have been a simple order for American industry to fill. But this feat was very difficult. In fact, the construction of this tiny fleet upon the waters of Lake Erie would compare in hardship with most projects undertaken by the United States Navy for World War II.

The invasion of Canada was a failure and Detroit, Mackinac, and Fort Dearborn had been surrendered for various reasons. Among the more important were: an unsettled and undeveloped land area without industrial facilities; no roads, or roads that were muddy paths; and water supply routes which went to the enemy uncontested. It added up to an army attempting to advance with long communication lines and transportation routes so undeveloped and so uncertain that their value was well-nigh worthless. These conditions also prevailed in the area where the fleet of two brigs and four gunboats was to be built.

Today, in that area, are located five urban centers of a highly industrial nature. They are Erie, where the vessels were built, Buffalo, Cleveland, Meadville and Pittsburgh. They are closely knit together by networks of concrete roads, waterways, railroads, airways, telephones, telegraphy, and radio. Need for any material or information for any project can be filled with great rapidity. Unfortunately, in 1812, these industrial facilities were unavailable. Automotive vehicles, rail locomotives, and steamships were not yet known, or not sufficiently developed for practical use, while telephone, telegraph, airplanes and radio were inventions of the future. It is, therefore, of importance to investigate the communities within this area and ascertain what was there—to find out, if possible, why the Perry fleet was so successfully launched upon its brief but glorious naval adventure.

Erie, in 1812, was a tiny settlement hugging the shore-line of Presque Isle Bay. Although it had held an important spot in American history since 1753 as a French or English military post, it could claim only seventeen years' existence as a civilian community. In 1795 Andrew Ellicott as Commissioner for the State laid out the town. Shortly thereafter, the first family arrived. During the short period before the war, the population grew to about four hundred, with an additional two hundred as "floaters."<sup>1</sup> Though incorporated as a borough in 1805 with an area of one square mile, the town did not nearly approach that size. The built-up section consisted of some fifty or sixty structures, almost all of wood, grouped closely together near the Bay. The boundary, in terms of present day streets, extended from the lake front to Sixth Street, and from Parade to Peach Streets (roughly six city blocks by six city blocks).

Industrial advance was practically nil. There were the usual grinding and saw mills, a blacksmith shop, and a tannery. In the main, livelihoods were made as farmers, merchants, or sailors and wagoners for the lucrative salt trade.

The factor that made Erie so favorable for the construction of the fleet was Presque Isle Peninsula. Starting about six miles west of the city, the semi-circular peninsula, very sandy and quite heavily timbered, juts out from shore and curves in a north-easterly direction for about five miles, almost touching the shoreline on the eastern side of the city. It is the only large natural harbor found on Lake Erie and serves as a superlative windbreak for ships. The bay area, approximately eight square miles, is sufficiently deep to take care of any of the lake boats. Probably the most important feature of the bay in 1812 was the bar and channel. Across the entrance was a sandy bar about a mile wide, extending from the tip of the peninsula to the lake shore. Usually the bar was submerged to a depth of only six feet. A narrow and winding channel, in which there were from five to nine feet of water, traversed this bar. At times, the channel depth decreased to as little as three or four feet. Only a skilled pilot completely familiar with the route of the channel could hope to enter into the harbor. Thus, while the fleet was being built, the British naval forces could watch the progress, but could not approach near enough to destroy the naval yards.

This brief review of Erie's facilities shows that it was ill-equipped for the undertaking of the project, except for the magnificent harbor and the unlimited supply of timber standing in the virgin forests surrounding the town.

Approximately one hundred miles from Erie was the town of Buffalo. It too was a youthful community, numbering about five hundred people. Although four or five houses had been built near the mouth of Buffalo Creek by 1795, the date of founding was 1798. In that year Joseph Ellicott surveyed and laid out the future city for the Holland Land Company. By 1812, it numbered about one hundred frame houses and stores with a very few brick or stone structures, stretching mostly along Main Street.<sup>2</sup> John Melish, visiting Buffalo in 1811, said that "the town is as yet too new for the introduction of any manufactures, except those of a domestic kind."<sup>3</sup> The activities were very similar to those in Erie—farming, trading and sailing.

Buffalo, as described above, would apparently be of little value to the forthcoming work at Erie. But it did have some favorable aspects. Just two miles away was the tiny village of Black Rock, situated at the mouth of Scajaguady Creek, a few miles down stream from where the waters of Lake Erie, flowing into Lake Ontario, forms the Niagara River. A government naval yard of a sort had been established near Black Rock. Limited supplies, shipped from Albany and Sackett's Harbor, accrued here. (Sackett's Harbor, the main naval base of the Great Lakes command, was situated at the east end of Lake Ontario.) Some of these supplies, plus five ships converted from traders to armed vessels, ultimately reached Erie. For the bulk of the necessary materials for the Erie fleet, sources had to be found elsewhere.

Approximately one hundred miles to the west of Erie, another settlement, Cleveland, was just beginning to grow. A large tract of land, called the Western Reserve, had been reserved by Connecticut for its citizens. Through the center of this reserve winds the Cuyahoga River, which finally empties into Lake Erie. It was towards the mouth of the Cuyahoga that Moses Cleaveland brought the first party of fifty in 1796. Not all of the fifty finished the trip. A few stopped at the mouth of Conneaut Creek to begin a settlement there. The original group was further depleted by others stopping at the site of present day Ashtabula. Cleaveland laid out the city in much the manner that it now stands—the large Public Square with the streets leading from it. Cleaveland was recalled shortly thereafter, never to revisit the place that bears his name.

Cleveland's growth was much less rapid than that of Buffalo or Erie. By 1812, it could boast of a population of a "little over 47

souls."<sup>4</sup> There was a dearth of industrial facilities and of most supplies. To describe this deficiency best, it need only be noted that a hospital built for Hull's sick, who were transferred from Detroit to Cleveland after the surrender, was made without a nail or a screw! Any expectation for assistance for the fleet from this quarter might be considered futile.<sup>5</sup>

Meadville, in 1812, must have resembled a far western settlement. It is described as a town where "tame Indians, trappers, raftsmen, boatmen, and countrymen, made it [a] colorful and sometimes turbulent place."<sup>6</sup> Located on French Creek opposite the mouth of the Cussewago, the site was first occupied in 1788 by David Meade. Driven out by Indians, the settlers temporarily returned in 1792 and permanently in 1795; at which time the town was surveyed and named after Meade.

At the time of the conflict, the population of Meadville was about five hundred people.<sup>7</sup> Their livelihood was made from the lucrative salt and lumber trade, and as farmers and merchants. Industrial advancement here did not go beyond the usual grist and sawmills. The construction of the fleet could not profit greatly from this bustling community.

One hundred and thirty miles from the newly-founded ship yards at Erie was Pittsburgh. This place had played a major role in the unfolding of American history. Situated as it is, at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers, its strategic importance was early realized and a war fought over its possession.

Highly important previous to Revolutionary War, the site attained a still more important position after the war's conclusion. The close of the war saw the beginning of a huge stream of immigration across the Appalachians into the Ohio Valley. As the influx grew larger, Pittsburgh grew larger, for it was located where land transportation was abandoned for the passage down the Ohio River to Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana. Pittsburgh became the "gateway to the West," where one bought and stocked up before the plunge into the wilderness beyond.

This peculiar position had made of Pittsburgh a comparatively large city—larger than any two others in the surrounding area. Recognizing that most of the immigrants' goods could be made there for far less than the cost of bringing the goods from the East, entrepreneurs and artisans flocked to "the Point." In 1810, Pittsburgh numbered 4,768,

and by the opening of the War of 1812 the figure had risen to about six thousand.<sup>8</sup>

Manufactories of all kinds were introduced by the artisan and the entrepreneur. The total ran well over a hundred places. There were foundries, cotton and fulling mills, ropewalks, glassworks, shops for many types of metals, steam engine works, steam mills for grinding and sawing, shipyards, and numerous others. Huge warehouses and merchant stores abounded in great numbers and were abundantly supplied. Already the Pittsburgh of 1812-15 resembled the Pittsburgh of today in many ways. Present were the characteristics which personify it—numerous industries, confident entrepreneurs, and bustling land and water transportation.

James Riddle in his *First Directory of Pittsburgh*, (1815), wrote: "Few places can boast of more useful improvements in manufactures and the mechanical arts than Pittsburgh. It has been justly and emphatically styled 'The Birmingham of America.'"<sup>9</sup> Another traveler states that ". . . the whole town presents a smoky appearance [from the prodigious use of coal] . . . Here one may see the surprising progress, which the people of this country are making in mechanics of almost every kind, both as it respects invention and workmanship."<sup>10</sup>

With these facilities, it is natural to suppose that Pittsburgh would be considered the main base of supply for the Perry fleet. Plans were made to use Pittsburgh for just that purpose. However, while this city did play an important role in the construction, its supply performance did not reach the magnitude that had been expected, not because of the city's inability to produce but because of other varied and unavoidable circumstances.

The five places described above were the large centers of the area surrounding the site of the naval yards. Some of these had supplies and materials which were essential to the success of the project. But this, in turn, raised another highly important question. The materials were available, but how were they to be transported to the place of use?

The success or failure of the completion of the Lake Erie force hinged greatly on this factor. If the necessary material could be transported to the site of construction, the major problem would be removed. Ordinarily, within the United States, such a situation can be solved without too much hardship. However, the area in question was still in the settlement stage, resulting in a transportation problem of wide scope.

Erie was so situated that it could be served by three modes of transportation. Firstly, there were the land routes which connected the

town with Pittsburgh and Meadville to the south, and Buffalo to the east. Secondly, there was Lake Erie which served as a convenient means of exchange with Buffalo, and through Buffalo with the East. The third possible avenue of supply was the Allegheny River-French Creek waterway from Pittsburgh to Waterford, just fourteen miles distant from Erie. With these three possible routes, communication and transportation would seem both adequate and convenient. Nevertheless, they were both inadequate and inconvenient.

From Erie, roads branched out toward Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Cleveland and even to the mountainous sections of central Pennsylvania. To Buffalo, two roads had been marked out, one in 1805, the other in the following year. Both were in use, but only when absolutely necessary, for neither was more than a path through the forest or along the lake shore. The time spent traveling and the hardships endured were incredible.

The journey from Erie to Buffalo by land was much dreaded even to the completion of the railroad; previous to 1815 or 1820 it was absolutely dangerous. Travelers finding the land road through Cattaraugus woods almost impassable for wagons, would be induced, if the weather was not very boisterous, to pass around the point of rock projecting into the lake. Many fatal instances are recorded of persons unacquainted with the country being overwhelmed by the waves. The nature of the soil through the woods would scarcely admit of a good road, and a journey once made was scarcely forgotten, for passengers felt that then and there, they escaped narrowly with their lives.<sup>11</sup>

Dobbins in April, 1813, attempted to bring three pieces of ordnance from Buffalo.

I started from Buffalo with three pieces but got through with only one. . . . After a most perilous expedition owing to the bad state of the roads, freshets in the streams, and washing away of bridges, breaking through the ice etc., etc. . . .<sup>12</sup>

Mail delivery from Buffalo was made only once a week, the trip usually taking a full day. Simeon Dunn, who had the position of Perry's personal messenger, notes in his diary that his trips took from seventeen hours to one and one-half days, depending upon the weather and creeks.<sup>13</sup> During the winter Erie was practically cut off from Buffalo, although sleighs did occasionally make the journey, mainly on the lake.

The roads between Erie and Pittsburgh were little better. The route between the two points followed fairly closely present day

Route 19 to Meadville. From here, the road went along the east side of French Creek into Franklin. From Franklin the road went in a southwesterly direction into Pittsburgh. A ferry had to be employed in entering the city inasmuch as no structure yet bridged the Allegheny.

Oliver Hazard Perry left for Pittsburgh on the thirty-first of March, 1813, and returned ten days later. Of that week-and-a-half period, six of the days were consumed in travel. Harm Jan Huidekoper, a very influential leader and resident of Meadville, in a reminiscent letter to his son-in-law wrote that ". . . the roads, being common country roads, were soon so cut by the heavy hauling on them as to become nearly impassable."<sup>14</sup> Noah Brown, master builder of the fleet, in a statement made after the war, remarks that "the roads were so bad that I had almost finished the fleet before any [supplies] arrived at Erie."<sup>15</sup> As early as November, 1812, before wagons were hauling supplies to the fleet, the editor of the *Crawford Messenger* warned his readers of a probable shut-down caused by the "bad state of roads" exhausting his stock of paper.<sup>16</sup>

Mail between the two communities was delivered once weekly via Franklin and Meadville. This service was started in 1801. Delivery took between three and four days. Adding the time spent in receiving the mail from Washington, usually about three days, the very least time in which any order or information could be forwarded to the naval yards was a week.

Overland hauling was unsatisfactory for a very simple reason.

Although western Pennsylvania was covered by a network of roads by 1812, it cannot be said that they provided satisfactory avenues of travel and transportation. In general the roads . . . were not constructed; they were merely 'opened'—that is, the trees were cut down and stumps were grubbed out. Sometimes a little digging was done on side hills and in passes, swampy places were filled with logs laid crosswise with a little dirt on top of them, and crude wooden bridges were constructed over some of the smaller streams. Little effort appears to have been made to avoid steep inclines, and culverts were practically unknown. Road maintenance consisted merely of the removal of fallen trees and the dumping of dirt into mudholes and washouts. . . . A trip over almost any of the roads with a wagon or a carriage was a difficult and hazardous experience, especially in the winter or spring. In the wet season, parts of the main roads appeared to be bottomless, and it is reported that wagoners sometimes spent three successive nights at the same tavern while working their wagons through a boggy section.<sup>17</sup>

Practically all hauling was done by four-wheeled vehicles known as Conestoga wagons. Developed previous to the French and Indian War in Lancaster County, this wagon had supplanted the pack horse and cart in trans-Allegheny freighting by the end of the eighteenth century. The wagon had a peculiar shape, being built "bellied," or high at each end in order to keep the load from slipping forward or back in the extremely rough roads or on the numerous uphill climbs and downhill descents. The length of the body was usually sixteen feet, while the overall length was about twenty-four feet. The wagon was capable of carrying between one and two tons, depending on the difficulty of the trip to be made. A special breed of horses, developed in the same region, were used to pull the mammoth wagons, six-horse teams usually being required. The black and gray horses were extremely large and powerful. Though very slow, the Conestoga wagon capably filled the great need for the transportation of sizable loads of material over long distances on the almost worthless roads of the early 1800's.<sup>18</sup>

Lake Erie, previous to the beginning of the war, had supplied the most accessible and most convenient means of travel and transportation between Erie and Buffalo. With favorable winds the journey could be made in less than a day. But Lake Erie is a treacherous and dangerous body of water. Storms descend upon it without warning, the waters become very choppy, and the water level along the shores is lowered to a considerable extent. Only the most skillful and experienced sailors could venture upon it with a feeling of safety. The lake's utility was also limited because of its being open to navigation for approximately six months out of a year. By November or December it was a hazardous undertaking to attempt to sail the lake; more usually, ice had already formed. The break-up of the frozen lake did not begin until April or May, and it was not uncommon for the lake to have ice until June. In 1813, the breaking up of the ice had begun about April 10.<sup>19</sup>

In the years under consideration the utility of the lake was further impaired by the conditions imposed by the state of the war. In the initial stage of the struggle, the Americans had between twelve and eighteen unarmed vessels on Lake Erie. Many of these had been captured during the early weeks of war, and the remainder had been forced to seek safety at Black Rock, Cleveland, or Erie. Until

September, 1813, the British naval force of some six vessels patrolled Lake Erie uncontested. Only an occasional vessel attempted to slip through the blockade. Thus, much of the ease and availability afforded by Lake Erie as a means of transportation was negated or rendered useless.

The other waterway, and by far the best for the prevailing situation, was the Allegheny River-French Creek system to Waterford, from Pittsburgh. Used by the Indians, this means had been adopted by the first white men as the best practical route between Lake Erie and the Ohio River. The French had constructed a chain of forts for protection of this important waterway, and the English and Americans, with the passing years, depended more and more upon it for travel and trade. The volume of traffic was large, especially from the salt trade from western New York and the lumber trade from around Meadville and Warren.

The distance between Pittsburgh and Waterford by water is considerably greater than that of the overland roads between the two places. However, the comparative ease with which larger freight loads could be moved more than compensated for the great difference in distance. The season for shipping was usually limited to the spring and fall, at which times there was a sufficient water depth. This was especially true of French Creek. During the dry season, French Creek to Waterford could be navigated only by canoe, while in the best periods boats carrying twenty tons were able to reach the town.

In the down-stream traffic both rafts and keelboats were used. However, for the reverse trade only a keelboat could be employed. The keelboats were "constructed like a whale boat, sharp at both ends; their length . . . about 70 feet, breadth 10 feet, and they are rowed by two oars at each end. These boats will carry about 20 tons. . . ." <sup>20</sup> The keelboatmen were as distinct a class as the Conestoga wagoners. Rough and unruly, they were recruited from the wildest elements of the population, for an up-stream trip was a most laborious and difficult task. "Keelmen not unfrequently at that day had their hide flayed and raw as a poor draught horse long galled by the harness." <sup>21</sup>

In the year of the battle, unusually high water in the Allegheny River and in French Creek enabled their use through the early months of the summer.

. . . it was remarked by those well qualified to judge, that without this fortunate circumstance, this extraordinary

rise, the squadron could not have been built, as it would have been impossible to transport the ordnance and necessary equipment overland. . . .<sup>22</sup>

After the keelboat reached Waterford, an overland journey of fourteen miles to Erie remained. A road between the two points had been built when the French began their southward move toward the Ohio. It was excellently constructed, but during the sixty-year period before the War of 1812 it had greatly deteriorated because of much use and no maintenance. The road was from two to five miles wide at various places, diversified with stumps, logs, logheaps, and very deep mudholes. It was not unusual for a load of salt or provisions, drawn by four to six oxen, to be four days in traveling the fourteen miles, although the average time en route was usually two days.

Old French Road, as it is called today, was relegated to a secondary position by the Erie and Waterford Turnpike. The salt trade had increased by such leaps and bounds that an improved road was of the greatest necessity. In 1805, a company was formed and undertook the project. The road was less direct and on higher ground than the French Road, primarily to accommodate the farmers who were stockholders. Four years later the road was opened for traffic. According to a contemporary newspaper account:

The manner of making this road has been different from the other turnpike roads in this state; the timber has been cleared off to the width of one hundred feet; thirty feet grubbed, and twenty feet in the center of which has been dug and the clay thrown up, raising the middle from eighteen inches to two feet higher than the sides; deep ditches are dug on each side to carry off the water, which leaves the part travelled on so solid that very little impression is made on it by the heaviest teams.<sup>23</sup>

The time of a journey was greatly cut, freighting costs decreased by two-thirds (even with the toll), and loads five times greater than heretofore could be drawn with the same number of animals.<sup>24</sup>

The combination of the Allegheny-French Creek waterway with the Erie and Waterford Turnpike was by far the most advantageous to the naval builders at Erie. It not only was the most convenient and least dangerous to use, but the terminals of it were located most strategically—Pittsburgh, as the source of Eastern and home-manufactured material; and Erie, as the utilizer of those supplies.

### III.

## THE BUILDERS OF THE FLEET

Many men planned and took part in the creation of the fleet. A compilation of their names would make a long and interesting list. However, five come to the front when considering the personnel of the group. Each has a varying degree of renown, graduating from "world-wide" to "virtually unknown." Yet each undertook and achieved success in some integral phase of the building of "the fleet in the forest." These men include: Oliver Hazard Perry, famous the world over for the Battle of Lake Erie; Henry Eckford, Noah Brown, and Daniel Dobbins, known only within a certain locale or within a specific field of endeavor; and Ebenezer Crosby, known only to those who study with great detail the preparatory phase of the Lake Erie fleet. What type of men composed the leadership? What abilities did they have and what was their part in the successful consummation of the project?

Daniel Dobbins has been previously introduced as the special messenger dispatched by General Meade to the authorities in Washington to render an "eyewitness" report of the surrender of Detroit. Because of his intimate knowledge of the lake regions, Dobbins had been invited to the conferences in which the program of ship building was resolved. His choice of the site for the construction of the vessels was accepted and, in addition, Dobbins was commissioned a sailing-master in the United States Navy with authority to begin the execution of the plans.

Dobbins had been born, near Lewistown, Mifflin County, Pennsylvania, on July 5, 1776. When nineteen, he left home, walking to Erie County. At Colt's Station, fourteen miles southeast of Erie, he found employment with Judah Colt, an agent for the Pennsylvania Population Company. On July 1, 1796, Dobbins made his first trip to Erie, remaining there for the rest of his life. Why he chose to stay in this tiny hamlet of four houses, Dobbins did not say and his papers are silent on the point. It is not unlikely though that his liking for the lake was a major factor. By 1800, he had become known as one of the best navigators upon the lake. In 1803, Dobbins was master of his own vessel. Trips were made all over Lake Erie and into Lake Huron, carrying salt, whiskey, furs, and other home and food products.<sup>1</sup>

Although he was highly skillful as a navigator, it is doubtful that Dobbins had had much experience building vessels. It is definite that he had knowledge in refitting and renovating boats, as he personally supervised the rebuilding of the schooner *Salina*—purchased jointly by him and Rufus Seth Reed in 1809.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the project assigned him must have been accepted with grave misgivings, but with a grim determination to see it through. His every action upon his return to Erie indicates that feeling. With untiring effort, Dobbins planned and schemed to get the construction underway against almost unsurmountable odds. He travelled far and ceaselessly for supplies, substituted whenever and wherever possible for those things so short in supply, and sought and hired labor personnel where available. He undertook a control of the town economy, since Erie was in the throes of a boom. The presence of hundreds of State militia, stationed on the edge of the town, had skyrocketed prices. Dobbins set up prices for board, for food supplies and for whiskey. The task required effort far beyond the call of duty.

Fortunately, assistance gradually arrived. At Black Rock, Dobbins found a shipwright capable of taking charge of the shipyard and workmen. Five months after the beginning of work, a master shipbuilder arrived from New York. For the first time, really professional guidance in the technical aspects was at hand. Finally, a few weeks later, Perry reached Erie and took over the general supervision of the whole project.

Dobbins continued on as advisor, supply officer and purchasing agent. Being so well acquainted with the surrounding country, he was able to ferret out essential material and facilitate its transportation to the base. When pilots were badly needed, Dobbins was expected to get them. Great credit must be given him.

Strangely enough, the man so much responsible for the success of the building did not participate in the Battle of Lake Erie. Dobbins commanded the *Ohio*, the tenth vessel of the fleet. Generally, this vessel is ignored inasmuch as it did not take part in the actual battle. A few days previous to the engagement, Perry dispatched the *Ohio* to Erie for food and munitions. While it was absent, the battle occurred. In 1814, when the prize money list was published and shares announced, Dobbins' name was omitted. He felt quite indignant, believing that a part was rightfully his for the magnificent service rendered. Claims were made for a sailingmaster's share, but Dobbins could receive no satisfaction. Finally, by the petition of influential friends in the navy and in Washington, the Secretary of the

Navy granted Dobbins a share of the prize money. However, Dobbins failed to receive one of the swords presented by Congress to all commissioned officers in the Battle of Lake Erie.<sup>3</sup>

The master shipwright whom Dobbins hired to relieve him of some of the shipyard duties was Ebenezer Crosby. Virtually no information can be found about Crosby. In the contract made between Dobbins and the shipwright the fact that he was a resident of Niagara County, New York is noted.<sup>4</sup> Crosby was an integral cog in the managerial direction. From the time that he was employed on November 3, 1812, until March, 1813, Crosby supervised and worked on the actual physical construction of the gunboats. This enabled Dobbins to give his attention to the other innumerable problems confronting the undertaking. Moreover, it is likely that Crosby was responsible, along with Dobbins, for the design of the gunboats. Dobbins, in a report to Lieutenant Angus at Black Rock, wrote, "I would have sent you a draft [of the gunboat] but Mr. Crosby has been so busy he has had no time to draw 'em. He has Drawn one to work by which looks well and I think will answer the purpose well."<sup>5</sup> Crosby continued to work at the shipyards after he was replaced by Noah Brown in March, 1813. His name appears on the payroll until June, 1813. From that time, Crosby seems to have disappeared completely from the pages of history.

On the last day of December, 1812, Captain Isaac Chauncey, commander of all the American naval forces on the Upper Lakes, arrived at Erie on a winter tour of inspection. Accompanying Chauncey was his chief ship designer and builder, Henry Eckford. Both left on the following day, never to return again to the Erie naval base. Nevertheless, the one-day stay meant many alterations in the work going on at that place. For these changes Eckford was mainly responsible.

Henry Eckford was born in Irvine, Scotland, on March 12, 1775. At the age of sixteen he immigrated to Quebec, Canada, where he began the study of ship designing and building in the yards of his uncle, John Black. In five years, Eckford had learned his craft from his relative and left to seek his fame and fortune in New York City. Eckford did not have to wait long, for by 1800, he had his own shipyard on the East River near the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Eckford's reputation grew rapidly; his designing innovations and rigging arrangements soon had the Eckford-built ship surpassing those of rivals in stability, speed, and capacity.<sup>6</sup>

In September, 1812, Secretary of Navy Paul Hamilton selected Isaac Chauncey as the person to gain control of Lakes Ontario, Erie, Huron,

and the others if necessary. Previous to the receipt of the orders, Chauncey had been a very efficient and energetic officer-in-charge at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Knowing Eckford's ability for building as well as designing, Chauncey hired him as his chief designer and constructor. During the war period, Eckford handled accounts for ships, supplies, and payrolls to a value of several million dollars. Being Chauncey's "right-hand" man, Eckford was usually stationed at Sackett's Harbor and carried on his main activities from this headquarters, chiefly for the Lake Ontario fleet, in somewhat similar straits as that on Lake Erie.

Chauncey and Eckford thought that the gunboats being built at Erie would not be sufficiently large. However, progress on two of the boats had so advanced that alteration was impossible. The other two, not yet begun, were re-designed by Eckford. More important, orders were given for the construction of a brig; later the orders were increased to call for two brigs. Eckford, of course, drew up the designs for the two brigs. This was a special problem, since a brig was much larger than a gunboat, and consideration of the bar with its small water depth at the entrance of the bay had to be taken into account. If the brig were made with the conventional lines, it might well have to be abandoned because of the lack of sufficient water. Eckford sketched plans for a vessel having an extremely shallow draught, resolving the problem with characteristic ease.

Eckford designed four of the six vessels built at Erie. Further service on his part included the refurbishing and the outfitting of five boats in the tiny naval yard at Black Rock. These five vessels later evaded the British blockade and joined the fleet in Erie. Three were used in the battle; one, the *Ohio*, missed the engagement because of Dobbins' trip for provisions; and the other was condemned as unfit for combat. Thus, Eckford had a substantial role in the building or outfitting of seven of the nine boats to engage in combat.

For his outstanding work during the thirty-year period from 1800 to 1830, and especially during the War of 1812, James Fenimore Cooper called him "undoubtedly a man of genius."<sup>7</sup>

Noah Brown was perhaps most responsible for the physical work done on the boats at Erie. He was born in Salem County, New York, in 1770. At the age of fifteen, he became a house carpenter apprentice. He worked as a house joiner for about nineteen years in Connecticut and New York City. In 1804, Brown and his brother Adam went to Newark, Canada, where they built their first vessel, a schooner for the Northwest Company. In the fall of the same year

they returned to New York to practice the shipbuilding trade. Then in March, 1808, they organized a company, Brown, Bell, and Company, and opened their own shipyards. The yard either adjoined Eckford's or was one shared with Eckford. Up to and including the first year of the war the Browns built, repaired, and converted numerous boats for the United States Navy and for private owners.<sup>8</sup>

After Chauncey had inspected the work at Erie and had left orders for the building of brigs, he went to New York and Washington to requisition and to facilitate the procurement of badly-needed stores in vast amounts and of as many workmen as could possibly be found. While in New York, and probably through Eckford, Chauncey hired Noah Brown to finish the greatly enlarged task on Lake Erie. Brown left New York on February 21, 1813,<sup>9</sup> and in ten days was at Erie. This rapid journey seems incredible even in a favorable season; yet Brown said, "The weather was very stormy and the snow very deep."<sup>10</sup> Brown made an immediate impression upon Dobbins. In one of his frequent reports to Chauncey, Dobbins wrote: "I received a line a few days since from you handed by Mr. Noah Brown, who appears to be the man that we want at this Place in order to drive the business. . . ."<sup>11</sup>

Brown immediately assumed the position of superintendent of construction and with skill hitherto unknown in the area pushed the building at a rapid pace. He and Dobbins formed a perfect team, complementing each other admirably. Under Brown's skillful direction, items in short supply were replaced by material that was on hand. He seldom failed to have a remedy of a sort for each emergency. Also, the personality that so quickly pleased Dobbins was as effective with the workers. Long hours and bad working conditions were accepted with unbelievable grace, as Brown was a man for whom the men enjoyed working. Still another important contribution by Brown was the construction of "camels". These camels provided the means whereby Perry was able to get the two brigs out of the harbor, across the bar, and into the lake.

After completing his work at Erie, Brown returned to New York. However, the value of his services was recognized, and he was dispatched to Lake Champlain to direct the construction of MacDonough's fleet. Upon completion of that job, Brown went to Sackett's Harbor. Here, with Eckford, he began work on two ships which called for 130 guns each. The ships were never finished because of the ending of the war.

In the postwar period, Brown built ships and naval fortifications, chiefly in New York. One of his most interesting projects was the

construction of the *Mute*. Designed and planned by Robert Fulton, the *Mute* was to be propelled by underwater machinery and was to be bombproof. Misfortune befell Brown in his old age and he, like Eckford, became impoverished. At the age of seventy, Brown was found working as a journeyman in a shipyard.

The man who was shortly to receive the homage of the nation and the glories of a hero reached Erie on March 27, 1813. Arriving comparatively unknown, Oliver Hazard Perry was to leave Erie six months later with all the honors that a grateful nation could bestow. That he deserved this fame cannot be denied, but the emphasis for the fame has generally been misplaced.

Perry was born August 23, 1785, at the old Perry homestead in South Kingston, Rhode Island, of "fighting Quaker" parents. At the age of thirteen Oliver received a commission as midshipman in the navy and was assigned to the warship commanded by his father. At the time, it was not unusual for the lads of eleven to serve as under-officers.

From that year (1801) until 1806, Perry served under a number of famous, or soon-to-be famous, men. The voyages took him to Europe and Africa, for it was the period of the Barbary Wars. In 1805, at the age of twenty, Perry became a lieutenant and was given command of a small schooner, the naval officers being pleased at the progress he showed. In 1808, after two years of inactive duty, Perry was recalled to oversee the construction of a number of the gunboats ordered by Jefferson. This experience was to prove of invaluable aid five years hence. The job having been successfully completed, Perry was given command of a fourteen-gun vessel, and with a squadron, cruised the northern and mid-Atlantic waters. Though tiresome, the cruise benefited Perry greatly, especially in the art of commanding men. In January, 1811, Perry was ordered to survey a number of Rhode Island harbors. Unfortunately, through faulty piloting and bad weather, his ship wrecked upon a reef. Perry requested an inactive status and an investigation. The court of inquiry found him blameless for the loss.<sup>12</sup>

Perry remained a private citizen until May, 1812, when he was promoted to master-commandant and was given command of twelve gunboats at Newport and New London. He recruited and trained the men and patrolled the coast. Ceaselessly, he drilled the men in all aspects of warfare and gradually molded a finely co-ordinated unit. But the relative inactivity began to bore Perry, and in September, 1812, he requested duty upon the high seas or upon the lakes. No

action was taken on the request until February, 1813, at which time Perry received a most prophetic message from Chauncey. "You are the very person that I want for a particular service, in which you may gain reputation for yourself and honor for your country."<sup>13</sup> On February 17, 1813, the long awaited orders came from Washington. "Go with all the best men in your flotilla, and join Chauncey at Sackett's Harbor."<sup>14</sup>

Five days later Perry was on his way to Sackett's Harbor. With a few stops en route, he reached Chauncey's headquarters on March 3. Because British attacks were expected momentarily, Chauncey kept Perry with him for two weeks. The attacks failed to materialize. Chauncey fully acquainted Perry with the situation at Erie and sent him off to supervise the task. The trip was very arduous, consuming eleven days in travel through storms and deep snows. On March 27, 1813, Perry first glimpsed the partially built boats.

A rapid survey and endless talks with Dobbins and Brown filled his initial days at Erie. Immediately realizing the numerous obstacles besetting the path to attainment of the objective, Perry set off for Pittsburgh only three days after taking command. From that time until the first week in August, Perry was continually on the move, going wherever supplies or workmen might be had, wherever anything of value might be found.

Although very young in age, Perry had already achieved an ability in leadership over men who served under him. It was an almost natural ability which, when blended with his impetuosity and quick temper, served as an inspiration which soon infected and infiltrated the feelings of all those about him. What his personality and achievements during the construction period meant to the project can best be understood from the words of Harm Jan Huidekoper, who was a frequent visitor in Erie at the time:

The public never knew the worth of that man. They have known him only as the victor of the English fleet on Lake Erie, and yet this was by far his smallest merit. Hundreds might have fought that battle as well as he did, and at all events hundreds did share with him in the honors of the victory. But to appreciate his character, a person must have seen him, as I did, fitting out a fleet of six new vessels of war, . . . at some hundreds of miles from the sea coast, and in a district where, except the green timber grow-

ing in the woods, not one single article necessary for the equipment of a vessel could be obtained that was not subject to a land transportation of some 120 to 400 miles through roads nearly impassable. I have seen him, when neglected and almost abandoned by his country, with less than a hundred sailors under his command, and half of those on the sick list, toiling to fit out his fleet, working from morning till evening, and having not men enough to row at night a single guard boat, while the enemy were cruising off the harbour, and might have sent any night their boats and burned the fleet. I have seen him, with his reputation as an officer thus liable to be blasted forever at any moment, without the power of averting it, and without anyone to sympathize with him, persevere unshrinkingly in his task, and evincing a courage far greater than what was required to fight the battle of the 10th of September.<sup>15</sup>

A brief recapitulation of the staff directing the herculean undertaking would have presented the following organization:

Daniel Dobbins—organizer, initial superintendent, and general "trouble-shooter."

Ebenezer Crosby—first designer and supervisor of construction.

Henry Eckford—architect and designer.

Noah Brown—superintendent of building.

Oliver H. Perry—general manager or chief director of the complete project.

The comparative youthfulness of the group should be noted. Perry at twenty-seven was the youngest; Noah Brown, forty-two years of age, was the oldest. The average age was thirty-five. Undoubtedly this youthfulness played no little part in the energetic manner with which the work was done. This factor becomes more impressive when it is compared with the average age of sixty or more of the blundering and almost senile army commanders who fought the initial campaigns of the war.

To these above men can be added the names of many others who aided invaluablely in varying degrees in some particular phase of the program. Among these might be included: Captain Isaac Chauncey, Commander-in-Chief; Rufus Seth Reed, local navy agent; George Harrison and Oliver Ormsby, navy agents at Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, respectively; Captain A. R. Woolsey, ordnance officer at Fort Fayette, Pittsburgh; and William Jones, Secretary of the Navy, who personally supervised shipments from Washington.

## IV.

### MANPOWER AND SUPPLIES

The early phases of the construction were hampered by many difficulties of an administrative nature. Opposing opinions delayed progress, and the work did not go forward at the expected rate.

Dobbins' formal orders to proceed with the building of the fleet were received on September 16, 1812. Two weeks previous, Captain Chauncey had been chosen to command the forces on the Great Lakes. He decided to concentrate on Lake Ontario matters while delegating Lake Erie to Master-Commandant John D. Elliott, second ranking officer on the lakes. When Dobbins arrived at Erie, he wrote to Chauncey in accordance with his instructions. He enclosed a copy of the instructions and a plan of intentions at Erie.<sup>1</sup> The letter was sent to Black Rock, where Elliott was at that time. Shortly thereafter, Dobbins received the following message:

... It appears to me utterly impossible to build gunboats at Presqu'île; there is not a sufficient depth of water on the bar to get them into the Lake. Should there be water, the place is at all times open to the attacks of the Enemy, and in all probability when ready for action, ultimately will fall into the hands of the Enemy, and be a great annoyance to our forces building and repairing at this place. From a slight acquaintance I have with our side of Lake Erie, and with what information I have obtained from persons who have long navigated it, I am under the impression Lake Erie has not a single Harbor calculated to fit out a Naval expedition; and the only convenient I am at present at, which is in between Squaw Island and the main, immediately in the mouth of Niagara River. I have no further communication to make upon the subject. Probably in a few days I shall be in possession of Commodore Chauncey's impressions when you shall again hear from me.<sup>2</sup>

Elliott had made known his views previous to Dobbins' receiving instructions at Washington. He had written to Chauncey that

... I have examined all the situations on Lake Erie; cannot find one that will answer our purpose. Those that have shelters have not sufficient depth of water and those with water cannot be defended from the enemy and the violence of the weather.<sup>3</sup>

Elliott then recommended Black Rock as the best place of a bad lot for the building of a Lake Erie fleet. Chauncey, ignorant of the plans made in Washington and equally ignorant of the Lake Erie facilities, naturally accepted the recommendation of his second-in-command.

Dobbins, his pride stung by Elliott's message, replied in no uncertain terms, notwithstanding the difference of rank:

. . . In regard to the idea entertained by you, that this place is not a suitable one to build gunboats at, allow me to differ with you. There is a sufficiency of water on the bar to let them into the lake, but not a sufficiency to let heavy armed vessels of the enemy into the bay to destroy them. The bay is large and spacious, and completely landlocked, except at the entrance. I have made my arrangements in accordance with my own convictions, for the purpose of procuring the timber and other material for their construction. I believe I have as perfect a knowledge of this lake as any other man on it, and I believe you would agree with me were you here, viz: That this is the place for a naval station.<sup>4</sup>

Dobbins did not receive an answer or any further communication from Chauncey or Elliott. It left him with a perplexing problem. He had been authorized to build the gunboats at Erie, but at the same time, instructions demanded that his activities be passed on by Chauncey. In the last days of October, Dobbins set off for Black Rock. He wanted the problem resolved. Upon reaching his destination, he found Lieutenant L. Angus commanding the station. Angus had not heard from Chauncey nor did he desire to take the responsibility of granting permission to Dobbins' work. Dobbins returned to Erie at a loss about what course to pursue.

Dobbins continued to write to Chauncey but at no time did he receive an answer. Chauncey seemed to have forgotten completely about Erie. In fact, no mention is made of it in his correspondence with the Navy Department until December 1, 1812, at which time he informed the Secretary that he would shortly leave for an inspection of Black Rock and Presque Isle.<sup>5</sup> The reason for the lack of attention was quite simple. Chauncey had written to Dobbins to cease work at Erie. Fortunately for all concerned and for the nation, the letter was never delivered. At least, Dobbins so informed Chauncey when he arrived at Erie.<sup>6</sup> From the time of his first communication to Chauncey on September 28, 1812, until January 1, 1813, Dobbins received not one word from his superior officers, except for Elliott's disapproving letter of October 2, 1812.

Not having received satisfaction from his own command, Dobbins began to correspond directly with the Secretary of Navy, Paul Hamilton. On December 12, 1812, Dobbins wrote that he had not heard from Chauncey or Angus since November 2, but had continued work on the boats nonetheless. However, the two thousand dollars allotted had been spent, and he was unable to make contracts for more materials or for workmen since he was not authorized to pledge payment by Washington. Dobbins asked Hamilton to give him this authority.<sup>7</sup> The following week Dobbins warned Hamilton that all work must be abandoned unless the necessary authority for making contracts was quickly forthcoming. Dobbins also sensed the efforts being made to retain Black Rock as the naval station and to abandon Erie. He warned Hamilton that

. . . In regard to the vessels cut down, and in an unfinished state at Black Rock, there can be but little confidence placed in their safety. The yard is within reach of the enemy's batteries, and if finished, the vessels could be cut to pieces in passing up the rapids into the lake.<sup>8</sup>

Dobbins was not far wrong in his estimation of Black Rock. The British batteries from Fort Erie, across the Niagara River from Black Rock, bombarded the yards and drove away over one-half of the workmen there. Not until the British fort was captured, could work proceed at that place. On his second point, Dobbins was proved incorrect only through the almost superhuman effort of over two hundred men who worked for about a week to bring five ships the few miles up the Niagara River. When they arrived at Erie, one of the vessels was condemned as unfit for combat, even though it had been refitted a few weeks previously.

This state of indecision continued to affect Dobbins' work immeasurably. It was especially felt in his employment of workers, for he was unable to hire them by contract. Only day-by-day hiring was possible, and only at considerable risk to himself. The paradoxical situation was finally ended with the visit of Chauncey and Eckford. Chauncey readily concurred with Dobbins' opinion that Erie had the best harbor available for the construction of a fleet. Also, highly pleased with the progress made on the gunboats despite the delaying restrictions, Chauncey ordered construction of the first of two brigs that were eventually built at Presque Isle.<sup>9</sup>

To get workmen in sufficient numbers and skills proved to be a thorny problem that plagued the builders from the beginning until the fleet was well on its way to completion. Erie itself had little to

offer in the way of skilled ship laborers. It meant that they had to be brought in from outside the area over long distances and at great expense.

Dobbins, at the very start of work, was fortunate to have available a number of skilled workmen. They consisted of master shipwrights, ship carpenters, and regular carpenters. From the period between October 3 and October 19, 1812, he hired at least three shipwrights and twelve carpenters.<sup>10</sup> The prospects for an employment problem seemed remote. However, the uncertainty of building caused Dobbins to release most of them. Even as late as mid-November, Dobbins wrote to Chauncey that he had fifty men available for work. The men had been members of the militia stationed at Erie. Their term being completed, they were available for work. The men would soon scatter, Dobbins warned, if the authority to hire them did not come shortly.<sup>11</sup> The authorization, of course, was not given. Thus, at the time of Chauncey's inspection in Erie, he found only five carpenters and Crosby working for Dobbins.<sup>12</sup> All, except Crosby, were residents of Erie, but all were house carpenters and quite unacquainted with shipbuilding methods.

After Chauncey had given his approval to the project, the recruiting of skilled workmen began. Six carpenters were enlisted at Pittsburgh in early February, 1813.<sup>13</sup> About the same time, Eckford sent thirty men from Sackett's Harbor where a large number had been assembled in the fall of 1812 when Chauncey had taken command.<sup>14</sup> On February 21, Noah Brown started from New York to Erie with a gang of fifteen. Eckford was scheduled to leave the same place with another thirty men three days later.<sup>15</sup> This group was probably the one about which Brown writes, ". . . sometime in March . . . I received some men from New York."<sup>16</sup> Eckford did not accompany them.

Chauncey realized the difficulty in supplying both Lake Ontario and Lake Erie with men and materiel from New York. To alleviate this load on New York, Chauncey suggested to the Secretary of the Navy that the "Mechanicks and stores for Erie . . . be gotten from Philadelphia."<sup>17</sup> With the letter, Chauncey included a requisition for both men and supplies required at Erie. He asked for

- 3 Blocks Makers and Tools
- 2 Good Blacksmiths and Tools
- 5 Good Shipjoiners and Tools
- 5 good Caulkers and Tools
- 40 good Carpenters and Tools
- 2 Boat Builders
- 5 pair Sawyers and Saws

Jones immediately directed George Harrison, the naval agent at Philadelphia, to fill the requests as quickly as possible.<sup>18</sup> Since the need for men was so urgent, it is surprising that Jones did not send some of the one hundred and fifty men he was holding at the naval yard in Washington. Though there was little work for these men, Jones kept them on the rolls for the express purpose of possible service on the Lakes.<sup>19</sup>

Harrison hired as many as he could of the required personnel and sent them off for Erie in late February. Brown, desperately in need of the men, anxiously awaited their arrival. On March 7, he informed Chauncey that the men had not yet arrived.<sup>20</sup> The whole month passed and still no workers arrived from Philadelphia. Chauncey then asked Jones to locate and speed them on to Erie.<sup>21</sup> Finally, when Perry went to Pittsburgh on March 31, he found them there. He, of course, brought the men to Erie on his return. Perry informed Chauncey that the men, after five weeks on the road, had reached Erie—but without their tools! The tools might be expected within ten days.<sup>22</sup>

Harrison had been unable to get the full complement of men, but knowing the desperate need, had them leave—still twelve or fourteen short of the required number.<sup>23</sup> In the meanwhile, Harrison received permission to have Oliver Ormsby, naval agent at Pittsburgh, recruit men at that place.<sup>24</sup> Ormsby could get only four or six men to leave the yards at Pittsburgh for the comparatively rough work at Erie. At least this is the inference that must be drawn from Perry's letter of April 10, when he notes that there were still eight men missing from the total requested. Perry also mentioned that Brown was quite unhappy about the two blacksmiths sent. "One is almost a boy; the other a striker for him."<sup>25</sup>

Dobbins, during the same period, sent a man to Pittsburgh to recruit carpenters. At the time, Ormsby had not yet been notified or authorized to hire workers. John Palmer, Dobbins' agent, was able to find a small number of them for the accounts show that he advanced the sum of one hundred dollars to bring "ship carpenters from Pittsburgh".<sup>26</sup>

Brown, meanwhile, had almost given up hope of ever seeing the Philadelphia workers. He asked his brother Adam, who was still at the New York shipyard to send more men from that place. These men arrived the last of April.<sup>27</sup>

Other workers for the fleet were four blacksmiths or blacksmith helpers who had never been released by Dobbins. They were residents

of Erie.<sup>28</sup> Chauncey arranged for riggers and sail makers to leave about March 15 from New York (probably). In addition, he intended to send men from Black Rock to assist the riggers.<sup>29</sup> Whether these arrangements were carried through is uncertain.

Perry sent one hundred and fifty officers and enlisted men to the Lakes after he had received his orders at Newport. When they arrived at Sackett's Harbor, Chauncey decided to keep them with him. Among these men were many who were experienced in the construction and outfitting of gunboats. In late March, thirty were dispatched to Erie under Sailing Master William V. Taylor, who was especially able in the rigging of a vessel. These men were used extensively in the late stages of the preparations when the rigging, mounting of the cannons, and other such duties were required.

At no time was there a lack of axemen, chippers, and sawyers. Most residents of the community, in common with the average frontiersman, could expertly wield an axe and saw. The wagoners were also in abundant supply. The extensive salt trade had brought an increase in their numbers. The wagoners practiced their trade in the trading season and farmed in the off-season.

By May, 1813, sufficient numbers of workmen of each type, with the possible exception of blacksmiths, were present to carry on the work at top speed. Brown's *Statement* says, "We then became strong for hands in May and drove the work. In all there had collected two hundred men. . . ."<sup>30</sup> The number of men given by Brown does not seem to include the woodsmen. By totalling the number of workers definitely known and estimating those who are known to have come, it is probable that Brown's figures are not far wrong. From the pay accounts available, it can be ascertained that a total of not less than seventy-five to a hundred men were engaged in the cutting and hauling of timber for the vessels.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the total working force could not have been smaller than three hundred men or thereabouts.

It has been noted that a majority of the working personnel were brought in from distant points—New York, Philadelphia, Sackett's Harbor, and Newport. To get to the place of employment entailed a journey of at least three hundred to five hundred miles during the season of the year hardly conducive to travel. The groups coming from New York probably made the first leg of the trip up the Hudson by boat. After reaching Albany, the men were loaded on wagons for the long ride across New York state. The Genesee Road, running from Albany directly westward to Buffalo, was an improved highway a considerable portion of the way. This, coupled with the severe weather

which had frozen the ground solid, facilitated the journey to Buffalo. From Buffalo, the lake shore road and the lake, both frozen, were utilized to complete the last one hundred miles of the journey. The group from Newport headed overland across Connecticut and Massachusetts to Albany, and then headed north for Sackett's Harbor. The men of this group, who eventually were sent on to Erie, and those who had earlier left for Erie used the Genesee Road, which ran about one hundred miles south of the naval station. The Genesee Road thus served as an avenue of travel for about one-half the workers of the fleet.

The large company of laborers recruited at Philadelphia journeyed over a more arduous route. To the foothills of the Alleghenies, travel was not unpleasant, since much of the road was somewhat improved and on rather level land. However, the remainder of the way to Pittsburgh was over mountains by way of the old Forbes Road which was not too well improved. In addition, travel over the mountains was scarcely feasible in the winter season. The men were over five weeks arriving at Erie, an extremely long time for the approximate four hundred miles. The reason, however, was more than the condition of the roads or the unfavorable weather. Jones had suggested to Harrison that the men go to Erie as a group under the direction of some responsible leader.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, Harrison's choice of a leader was faulty and resulted in the men procrastinating and delaying along the way. They had already been in Pittsburgh for a few days when Perry found them there.

The wages paid the workers were high. As is generally the case, war, with its accompanying demands upon industry for materiel, raised the wages far above the prewar levels. At the same time, the large pay offered undoubtedly served as inducement for the men to make the long jaunt to Erie. From the account available a very accurate survey of the scale can be made.<sup>33</sup>

A carpenter's wages depended on his skill or rating. Crosby was the highest paid—drawing two and a half dollars plus "good lodgings and board" and one-half pint of whiskey per day.<sup>34</sup> Ship carpenters received \$1.75 and \$1.50 each day while the remuneration of regular carpenters was \$1.25 or \$1.00. In March, when men were still urgently needed, Jones authorized Harrison to have Ormsby at Pittsburgh pay as high as \$2.00 per day for carpenters of any kind.<sup>35</sup>

The rates of pay for the men getting the timber and preparing it for use also varied with the skill required. Axemen received fifty to sixty-two and one-half cents per day. Sawyers' wages ranged from

eighty cents to \$1.50. The wagoners, hauling timber chiefly, were paid from \$1.00 to \$3.25 each day for themselves and the team. Of course, the rate depended upon the size of the wagon and the distance that the timber had to be hauled. The average ran about \$2.50, team included.

Blacksmiths averaged \$2.00 per day while their assistants or strikers were paid sixty-two and one-half cents.

The riggers, being mainly officers and enlisted men of the navy, received their usual naval pay.

Working conditions for the men were not of the best. But anything to the contrary could hardly be expected when consideration is made of the locale of the building. The men worked from dawn to dusk, there being no specific hourly work-day established. In emergencies, when a certain need had to be filled quickly, the men worked through the night. During the early stages, the weather was so severe that work could go on only after a rude shelter had been built over the gunboats.<sup>36</sup> After the personnel had reached full strength, Brown described their activity with unstinted praise. "It appeared that every man was engaged as if he was on a strife. . . ."<sup>37</sup> When the fleet construction had been completed and the crossing of the bar was attempted, the men worked in four feet of water and went without sleep for two or three days.

The men, as they arrived, were housed in two barn-like structures. One of the buildings accommodated two hundred men, and the other had facilities for fifty.<sup>38</sup> Arrangements were made to have the workers boarded in private homes. The residents of the city were very cooperative in that respect.

Dobbins wisely established a voluntary economy control with the cooperation of the merchants. The fact that numerous purchases of supplies were made from these merchants, of course, served as a fine bargaining point. With the landlords Dobbins fixed a rate of thirty-two to thirty-three cents per day for board.<sup>39</sup> While the food supply remained adequate, prices continued at a very low level. Thus, the pay scale was exceedingly high in comparison with the cost of living.

However, the British blockade, the influx of workers, and the assigning of 1,500 men of the State militia all combined to raise havoc with the food supply, and shortages soon developed. Several trying days resulted for Perry, Dobbins, and Brown as the men went on strike. Brown, relating the incident, wrote:

I found great difficulty in procuring provision for my men, but with great exertion I succeeded by sending men back into the country, and then had to give a high price for it.

My men several times raised and declared they would work no longer if they could not have better fare; I satisfied them by giving them liberty to go and buy all the cattle and other provisions they could find. Several were gone four or more days, and when they came back their report satisfied them all, so I had very little trouble afterwards. I did all that man could do to procure the best the country afforded.<sup>40</sup>

By mid-June, actual construction on the vessels was completed. There remained yet the outfitting and rigging, but inasmuch as the carpenters, sawyers and others were not able to do this work, they soon departed. Brown took most of these men with him at the beginning of July, 1813, for other places where naval building required their services. But he left Sidney Wright, his foreman, with sixteen men at Erie to keep the fleet and boats in order.<sup>41</sup>

Materials with which to build the fleet were at no time plentiful. Frequently, shortages slowed up work considerably. On several occasions substitutes were devised for those things short in supply. The needs were filled at times from some rather amazing and surprising sources, but the materiel was assembled nonetheless.

The one and only thing of which there was a bountiful supply was timber. Forests of pine, chestnut, walnut, ash, oak, and other species surrounded the town. Axemen and sawyers, guided by experienced ship carpenters, cut down, hewed, and squared the wood into planks suitable for immediate use. All the work was done by hand since the sawmills operating were some miles from the trees cut down or from the navy yard. In spite of the need for the vessels, great care was taken in the choice of the trees which were to be used. Inspection of the *Niagara*, after it was brought up from the bottom of the bay in 1913, showed that most of the ribs were constructed of "natural knees", giving unusual strength to the hull. However, since the job was so hurried, various types of wood were used, side by side. The ribs were of oak, poplar, cucumber and ash.<sup>42</sup> Planking for the frames were usually of white and black oak. Decks were laid with white pine. The bulwarks also were white pine and were secured to stanchions of red cedar and black walnut. Sweeps and oars were made of "good white ash".<sup>43</sup> At all times only unseasoned wood was used, no other being available, and frequently timber was a tree and a part of a vessel on the same day.

Iron was almost totally unavailable in Erie. Practically every pound had to be imported from the surrounding area. To cut down the trees Dobbins had to send to Meadville for steel for axes, there being none usable in Erie.<sup>44</sup> In December, Dobbins was able to procure three and a half tons. "I have brot the iron from Pittsburgh which comes high. The roads have been so bad."<sup>45</sup> During the same month, another tiny shipment was made from Meadville.<sup>46</sup> During January, spike rods were found and brought to Erie. Previous to the shipment, tree-nails were being used to hold the vessels together. From the rods which arrived, plus subsequent shipments, the blacksmiths were able to make hand-hammered wrought iron nails and spikes. In February, another one and a half tons were procured for the fleet.<sup>47</sup>

In the same month, Chauncey sent to Jones a long requisition for materials for Erie.<sup>48</sup> Most of the items were for iron of various types, which, Chauncey thought, could be had at Pittsburgh. The items listed included:

5 tons inch spikes	2 tons 1½ square iron
1 ton 8 and 9 inch spikes	3 tons flat 2½ to 4 iron-thin
2 tons 6 inch spikes	6 bars 2 and 2½ inch square iron
3 tons 1⅛ inch round iron	6 bars steel
6 tons ¾ inch square iron	6 bars flat iron 5 inches wide
4 tons spike rods	4 bars square iron 3½ inches wide
4 tons 1¼ inch square iron	500 pounds nails, assorted

It is unknown whether the order was completely filled by Pittsburgh. Bad transportation conditions hampered shipment to a large extent and it was not until July, 1813, that the iron arrived in quantity. By that time, most of the fleet was completed. Brown writes, "The Government was to send iron . . . but the roads were so bad that I had almost finished the fleet before any arrival at Erie."<sup>49</sup> Though the iron arrived too late for use in the boats, it was utilized for other purposes of the fleet. William Coleman, a visitor from Cleveland, gives an "eye-witness" account of its use:

I was at Erie in August, 1813 and went up to the Cascade where Perry's vessels were getting ready to cross the bar. . . . I went into the Smiths' shop where the men were repairing and getting ready the boarding pikes, etc., and saw large piles of scrap iron. What seemed to me very singular was that the workmen, when they wanted a small piece of iron would cut it off from a bar, and would probably take twice as much as they needed, and throw the balance on the already large pile of scraps. I thought they were very wasteful of Uncle Sam's property and took the liberty of asking one of the workmen why they wasted the iron in that manner. His reply was short and to the point—. . . "Our orders

from headquarters are to make all the scraps we can. They will be sewed up in leather bags of proper size and used to cut the rigging of the British vessels when we come into close quarters."<sup>50</sup>

There was no relaxing on the part of Dobbins and Brown even though the prodigious requisition had been made by Chauncey. The search for iron went on. In February, Thomas M. Miller returned with a load of iron from Bellefonte.<sup>51</sup> It must have been a most hazardous trip through the rugged and wooded hills and mountains of central Pennsylvania. The first week of March another wagon came through from Buffalo with spike rods<sup>52</sup> and two weeks later James McElroy brought in a "waggon from Pittsburgh".<sup>53</sup> At the same time, Thomas P. Miller managed to obtain still another load of iron at Buffalo.<sup>54</sup>

Still another source for iron was the schooner *Salina*. It will be remembered that this is the ship that Dobbins was sailing when Mackinac fell early in the war. After Detroit surrendered, the vessel was taken by the British and used for the supply of their own troops. On February 25, 1813, two ships, one being the *Salina*, were sighted nine or fourteen miles off Erie (depending on whether you read the *Pittsburgh Mercury* or the *Commonwealth*). The ships, frozen in the ice, must have drifted across from the Canadian side of the lake, where they had been abandoned. Men were immediately dispatched on sleighs to investigate. They returned with food, other supplies, and "some old iron and five wagon wheels,"<sup>55</sup> plus iron that was salvaged when the vessels were burned.

Despite all these varied sources, shortages occurred and Brown was forced to look for more iron. ". . . I rode all around to the neighboring towns and bought of all the merchants every bar of iron I could find."<sup>56</sup> Nothing that contained iron was overlooked. Scraps of all kinds were taken to the blacksmiths for reconversion to the needed articles. However, in June, when the fleet was almost completed, Perry was still complaining of the "great delay for lack of iron of proper size."<sup>57</sup> Iron more than any one single item hampered construction of the fleet.

Coal was essential for the blacksmith work, but no problem was presented here. Frequent mention is made in Brown's account for the payment of coal; records alone show the purchase of over two thousand bushels.<sup>58</sup> Where the coal was obtained cannot be ascertained, but the place was probably in Erie County or close by, inasmuch as the hauling charges for the coal are relatively inexpensive.

One materiel shortage that was never overcome was of the oakum necessary for caulking the gunboats and brigs. Chauncey included in his requisition to Jones a request for three tons of oakum, twenty-five barrels of pitch, ten barrels of tar, twenty barrels of rosin, and two barrels of oil.<sup>59</sup> It is quite evident that the oakum and the rest did not reach Erie in time, for Brown was finally forced to use a substitute. A novel method of caulking which utilized tea lead was evolved.<sup>60</sup> The oakum that was used came from the naval yard at Black Rock, or was made by burning the rigging and cables of the recaptured *Salina*.<sup>61</sup>

Most of the rigging requirements were met by the ropewalk of John and Mary Irwin, which was located at Third and Liberty Streets, Pittsburgh. In December, the Irwins wrote to Dobbins asking for the contract. Again on January 22, 1813, they requested the work and offered prices of thirteen and one-half cents per pound for bolt rope and cable yarn of the best quality (twenty to twenty-four threads in each three inch rope) and other at twelve and one-half cents per pound (fourteen to eighteen threads). They warned that the contract would have to be let shortly at these prices because the war was driving the cost up considerably.<sup>62</sup> Dobbins also received an offer from A. N. Richardson who was an agent for a Kentucky firm.<sup>63</sup> However, from official correspondence it would seem that contracts for the purchase of rigging were not made until April when Perry made his hurried trip to Pittsburgh.<sup>64</sup> In June, Chauncey reported to Jones that the cordage was being bought in Pittsburgh.<sup>65</sup> The purchases were made from the Irwins, for Riddle in his *First Directory of Pittsburgh* (1815) wrote, "The principal part of the cordage of Perry's Fleet was made here. Two cables weighed each about 4,000 pounds and were four and one-half inches in diameter."<sup>66</sup>

Another source for the rigging was the *Salina* after its recapture. Dobbins' old ship yielded ". . . a suit of rigging, one good hawser, one old and one new cable. . . ."<sup>67</sup> Still another source is noted by Simeon Dunn:

A vessel containing rigging, etc., for the fleet building at Erie ran into Catarangua Creek between Erie and Buffalo to avoid a British vessel; an express was dispatched and she was unloaded and the contents brought away in eleven teams. This was done with great dispatch. I assisted in the undertaking.<sup>68</sup>

It was realized that most of the canvas for the sails could not be had at Pittsburgh, Buffalo, or any other close-by community. Chauncey sent a special order for this materiel.<sup>69</sup> It included:

150 Bolts of #1 (which can be gotten near or at Pittsburgh)  
18 Bolts of #4  
18 Bolts of #5  
80 Bolts of #6

Jones sent the order to Harrison requesting that it be filled in Philadelphia and shipped on to Erie.<sup>70</sup> Harrison complied and dispatched the canvas sufficiently early not to worry Perry and the others at Erie.

Soon after Chauncey had authorized Dobbins to continue with the project at Erie, Dobbins began looking for a place to make the anchors required for the fleet. He informed Chauncey that he was negotiating for them with the Pittsburgh Steam Machine Company which was located on Front Street below Ferry Street in Pittsburgh. George Evans, son of Oliver Evans, a famous steam engine inventor, was the owner of the company. They desired to make the anchors, and Dobbins thought contracts ought to be made since the boats were scheduled to be completed early in spring<sup>71</sup> No further action was taken until April, at which time Perry informed the company to begin casting the anchors.<sup>72</sup> Evidently, the company had never made them previously as patterns to cast by had to be ordered from Philadelphia.<sup>73</sup>

Perry desired the anchors by May 1, but the delay in delivery of the patterns, coupled with the inexperience of the workmen, made the fulfillment of the order by that date impossible. On June 12, Perry wrote Chauncey that the anchors would not be ready until July 20 and asked that Chauncey send two of them from Sackett's Harbor.<sup>74</sup> However, the stream anchors did arrive about a month earlier than the July 20th date, although they were of little value without the bower anchors.<sup>75</sup> In mid-July, with the fleet ready for sailing, Perry became desperate for anchors. Jones then ordered Harrison to purchase them in Philadelphia.<sup>76</sup> He informed Chauncey to that effect and told him that Perry could expect the anchors delivered within fifteen days.<sup>77</sup> If the hauling time set forth by Jones is correct, it is almost impossible for the anchors to have reached Erie before the vessels crossed the bar and the supposition must be made that the Pittsburgh Steam Engine Company had finished the anchors ordered and sent them to Erie previous to the arrival of those from Philadelphia.<sup>78</sup>

Sixty-five cannon of several kinds and sizes were shipped to Erie for the arming of the fleet, thirty-six from Washington and the remainder from New York and Sackett's Harbor *via* Buffalo. According to the list<sup>79</sup> compiled by Dobbins on August 22, there were

3	32 lb. long carronades
40	32 lb. short carronades
5	24 lb. long carronades
2	18 lb. long carronades
15	12 lb. long carronades

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 65

Of these cannon, fifty-five were mounted on the ships which were in combat, two were on the *Ohio*, one on the *Amelia* (condemned), and seven were kept in reserve.<sup>80</sup>

Shortly after Chauncey took command at Sackett's Harbor, he arranged for the shipment of thirty-two guns to Buffalo,<sup>81</sup> for at that time it was thought that Black Rock would be the main naval station on Lake Erie. On September 26, Chauncey asked Hamilton to cast forty-four 32 pounders "for use on Lake Erie".<sup>82</sup> Hamilton authorized the casting of the cannon.

Nothing more was done about ordnance for the fleet until considerable construction progress had been made. On February 2, 1813, Jones informed Chauncey that there were thirty 42 pound carronades at Washington.<sup>83</sup> If Chauncey so desired, the cannon would be sent to Erie by way of Pittsburgh.<sup>84</sup> Three days later, Jones ordered Tingey, superintendent of the Washington Navy Yard, to begin proving the cannon at George Foxall's factory in Georgetown.<sup>85</sup> On February 15, the first wagoners were hired by Jones to transport the cannon to Pittsburgh.<sup>86</sup> Three weeks later, by March 6, thirty-two men had been employed to take thirty-five of the cannon to Pittsburgh. Only one remained to be sent.<sup>87</sup>

In the meanwhile, Chauncey asked for four long 32's for the gunboats<sup>88</sup> (the thirty-six sent were short 32's for the brigs). Jones notified him on March 27 that most of the short 32's had already been on the way for some time and should be in Pittsburgh. Also, it was impossible and impractical to send the requested long 32's by wagon from Philadelphia because of the roads. The best solution would be to send them from New York.<sup>89</sup>

During Perry's visit in Pittsburgh, Ormsby notified him that the carronades, from Washington, now over a month in transit, were due in about ten days.<sup>90</sup> They arrived a few days later and were immediately loaded on keelboats for passage up the Allegheny River and French Creek. The Mercer newspaper carried that information in its April 17 edition.<sup>91</sup>

To Dobbins was delegated the task of removing the guns from Buffalo to Erie. Because of the break-up of the ice on Lake Erie and

the bad condition of the roads, Dobbins was far from successful on this particular job. He did succeed in bringing a few back after a most difficult and trying month of work and at an expense far greater than for the three-hundred mile trip from Washington to Pittsburgh.<sup>92</sup> Most of the cannon remained at Black Rock until the British were defeated at Fort George and were forced to evacuate Fort Erie in June. With the British defeat, the Niagara River was made safe for use and the five boats at Black Rock, loaded with stores and cannon, set off for Erie, narrowly escaping an engagement with the British naval forces in Lake Erie.

No definite source is known from which the ammunition (gunpowder) was received. It had been believed that the Du Pont Company supplied the powder, but this has been proved to be false. (See Appendix.) The *Pittsburgh Mercury* notes ammunition going up the Allegheny,<sup>93</sup> but whether this was powder or shot is uncertain. Perry in his report to Chauncey, upon his return from Pittsburgh, makes no mention of powder although he includes all the other supplies needed from Pittsburgh.<sup>94</sup> It is more likely that the powder came from Buffalo, for Chauncey specified in his orders that powder be shipped with the guns when they were sent to Buffalo from Sackett's Harbor.<sup>95</sup> When Perry sailed the five ships from Black Rock, he took with him all the supplies at the station.<sup>96</sup> On August 29, three and one-half tons of ammunition was brought to Erie from Buffalo.<sup>97</sup> Some of this load was taken to Perry. Dobbins, who had been dispatched to Erie on August 22 for stores and provisions, returned to Sandusky on September 3, undoubtedly carrying powder with the other supplies.<sup>98</sup>

Almost all of the shot for the fleet was supplied by a Pittsburgh factory. The contract was let by Perry to the M'Clurg foundry, which was located at Fifth and Smithfield Streets.<sup>99</sup> To superintend the casting of the shot, Perry received the aid of Captain Abraham R. Woolsey, an ordnance officer in the United States Army, who was stationed at Fort Fayette, Pittsburgh. Perry thought very highly of the man and wrote highly of him to Jones for the services rendered.<sup>100</sup> In addition to this source, "6024 pounds of shot, fixed and unfixed grape shot, and fixed and unfixed cannister shot" was taken off the *Salina*.<sup>101</sup> However, it is unknown whether this shot could have been used in the American cannons.

The transportation of many of the items to Erie has already been noted. Iron came overland from Buffalo, Bellefonte, Meadville, and Pittsburgh, with possible shipments by water from Pittsburgh in June. The riggings and cordage were probably brought up the Allegheny

River and French Creek from Pittsburgh. Additional amounts of rigging came from Buffalo, part of the way by boat and the remainder by wagon. The canvas was bought in Philadelphia and sent to Erie in a surprising manner. Clyde Kelly writes that part of Perry's equipment was transported from Philadelphia in United States mail coaches.<sup>102</sup> The only equipment from Philadelphia was canvas, and it does not seem illogical to suppose that Kelly means that material. The anchors and shot were both shipped to Erie by keelboats. The cannon came overland from Washington to Pittsburgh, then by boat to Erie. Other cannon were supplied by wagons to Buffalo from Sackett's Harbor and New York. From Buffalo to Erie, the lake was utilized. Powder probably came by boat from Buffalo. In addition small quantities of many of these stores were taken from the *Salina*, thereby necessitating the use of sleighs.

If payment for the various supplies were made at Erie through Brown or Dobbins, costs can be cited. However, for many of the items the Navy Department, Chauncey, or the naval agents at Philadelphia and Pittsburgh made the payments and very scanty records exist for them.

Dobbins was originally given a draft for two thousand dollars which he spent very quickly. The record of the expenditures sent to Hamilton accounted for the sum in the following manner:

Timber and hauling	\$900	for 200 tons
Iron	800	for $3\frac{1}{2}$ tons
Coal	50	(1000 bushels at 5 cents)
Teamwork	160	

The rest for building a smith shop, shelter, and the smith works.<sup>103</sup>

From the above, it can be determined that iron was very expensive, running well over two hundred dollars per ton. Coal was, on the other hand, quite inexpensive, being only five cents per bushel. Timber was bought at the rate of one dollar for each tree.<sup>104</sup> For finished timber there was, of course, a high cost. In a contract between Dobbins and George W. Reed, the latter agreed to supply white pine planks of twenty-five to forty-five feet in length and two inches thick for \$3.87½ per hundred feet, delivered at the yard.<sup>105</sup> Another contract for sweeps and cars of ash called for delivery at the cost of \$4.50 for each one hundred feet.<sup>106</sup> The price of spars was calculated at about \$4.35 for each, while cedar posts cost fifty cents per post.<sup>107</sup> The price of rigging has already been noted.<sup>108</sup>

Cost of transportation was extremely high. Harm Jan Huidekoper thought that "we would not be far wrong in estimating the expense of transportation from Philadelphia to Erie at about twenty cents per pound."<sup>109</sup> This was an increase of seven and one-half cents over prewar figures. Professor Baldwin estimates the cost of wagon transportation from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh at five cents a pound.<sup>110</sup> The five cent charge is borne out by the payments made to the wagoners carrying the ordnance from Washington to Pittsburgh, a distance of about three hundred miles. Each was paid \$150 for a load of about three thousand pounds.<sup>111</sup>

From the accounting of expenditures made by Brown the cost of building is put at a figure of \$10,265.18, computed to June 26, 1813.<sup>112</sup> Dobbins, with additional payments made after the above date or for items not included in the account, figured that he "had disbursed to the amount of between ten and twelve thousand dollars . . ."<sup>113</sup> These sums do not cover the huge shipments made on the Chauncey requisition, the ordnance, shot, ammunition, cordage, oakum, etc. It does include payment for some of the iron, timber, and sundries contracted for by the Erie men. Also, a large portion of the sum was used to pay the wages of the workers. An accurate total for the cost of building and outfitting the vessels is impossible to make, inasmuch as many of the records have been lost or destroyed.



## V.

### CHRONOLOGY OF THE FLEET'S CONSTRUCTION

Several persons writing histories of the Battle of Lake Erie or the biography of Oliver Hazard Perry refer to the fleet as having been built in seventy or ninety days. This is a misconception due, partially, to the idea that little progress had been made on the vessels previous to the arrival of Noah Brown and his men at the beginning of March, 1813. All the ships were launched before the end of May. Thus, roughly ninety days were consumed in building. But this is far from the actual circumstances. Therefore, a chronological account will serve well as a chart of progress for the fleet to the time of its launching. Only official correspondence and contemporary newspapers shall form the basis of the account. Newspapers may be considered trustworthy inasmuch as their news was received from persons residing in Erie who had observed the building.

September 15, 1812—Dobbins received orders from Secretary of Navy Hamilton to construct four gunboats at Presque Isle.<sup>1</sup>

September 26, 1812—This is the probable date of the beginning of work on the fleet. The men actually had to begin by making their own axes, for which purpose steel was obtained from Meadville. Tradition has Dobbins cutting a black oak, but the cutting of timber may have begun later.<sup>2</sup> The site of the yard was chosen about this time. Dobbins' choice was the mouth of Lee's Run between Peach and Sassafras Streets. The creek is now non-existent. Three gunboats were built here.

December 2, 1812—Dobbins said work was proceeding, "and [we] have one of the Boats Ready to Rais. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

December 12, 1812—". . . have at this time two of the boats on the stocks." One was in frames; the other had the keel laid and the timber cut for it.<sup>4</sup>

December 19, 1812—" . . . two of the vessels on the stocks, one of which is timbered up and the other in frames."<sup>5</sup>

January 1, 1813—Chauncey, on a tour of inspection, reported two gunboats with frames raised, two almost ready for frames. He altered the dimensions of the latter.<sup>6</sup> He also authorized the construction of a three-hundred-ton brig. Chauncey believed that boats would not be ready until middle April.<sup>7</sup>

January 21, 1813—The planking of two of the vessels had been begun the previous week.<sup>8</sup>

February 16, 1813—Chauncey informed Jones that he had written the day previous to Dobbins authorizing a second brig of three hundred tons.<sup>9</sup>

March 7, 1813—Brown in a report to Chauncey said that the keels for both brigs were ready to lay and the gunboats were about one-half finished.<sup>10</sup> Because of the size of the brigs to be built, Dobbins thought there was not enough water depth at Lee's Run to launch them. He therefore established a second naval yard at the mouth of the Cascade Creek (at the foot of present-day Cascade Street). Its location, then, was one mile west of the village. The brigs *Niagara* and *Lawrence*, plus the pilot boat *Ariel*, were built at this yard.

March 11, 1813—Dobbins wrote that the work "... has gone very fast the keels of the two brigs are laid or ready to lay and a number of the frames made. . . . The gunboats two of them are getting the clamps in for the beams in the bottom Ready for Caulking."<sup>11</sup>

March 16, 1813—Chauncey thought the Lake Erie Fleet would be ready by June 1, 1813.<sup>12</sup>

April 11, 1813—Perry wrote Jones that the frames for the two brigs had been up for several days.<sup>13</sup>

April 16, 1813—Chauncey heard from Brown. The latter said the two brigs had their frames raised and two gunboats were ready for caulking, but were awaiting a shipment of oakum.<sup>14</sup>

April 22, 1813—The Pittsburgh *Mercury* reprinted an April 17 dispatch from the Mercer newspaper that the gunboats were to be launched in a few days. The brigs were planked to the bends and they should be launched in six to eight weeks.<sup>15</sup>

April 23, 1813—Brown informed Chauncey by letter of April 5 that three gunboats were now ready except for caulking. Chauncey still thought the fleet would be ready by June 1.<sup>16</sup>

May 19, 1813—All the gunboats had been launched. One gunboat had guns mounted. The others were ready to get them when they arrived from Buffalo. Brigs would be ready to launch about June 1.<sup>17</sup>

May 24, 1813—"An attempt was made this morning to launch one of the Brigs. After moving ten or twelve feet she stopped. Mr. Brown has hopes of getting her off this evening."<sup>18</sup>

May 28, 1813—"The brigs would have been launched before this time had it not been for an unfortunate accident. In attempting to launch one of them on Monday last May 24, she ran against a piece of timber. They have not been able to get her loose yet, and it is uncertain when they will."<sup>19</sup>

May 29, 1813—Chauncey informed Harrison erroneously that the two brigs had been launched. He expected to have the fleet ready by June 15.<sup>20</sup>

June 6, 1813—The brig had been finally launched and the whole fleet was now afloat. They "will probably put out to sea in the course of eight or ten days."<sup>21</sup>

June 10, 1813—"The brigs at Erie are all safely launched into the destined element, and will be ready to sail about the first of July."<sup>22</sup>

June 12, 1813—Perry informed Chauncey that the anchors for the two brigs would not be ready until July 20.<sup>23</sup>

Mid-June, 1813—" . . . We had completed our vessels by the middle of June. . . ." Brown's statement covers only construction, not the outfitting of the fleet.<sup>24</sup>

June 19, 1813—"Both brigs are nearly finished; riggings and guns on one is finished, the other shortly."<sup>25</sup>

June 24, 1813—One of the sloops would be ready for service in a few days provided the bower anchors arrived. The other brig would be ready when the anchors were received in Erie. Perry understood that they were on the way and expected them within three weeks. Also there was a delay because of the lack of iron of a proper size.<sup>26</sup>

June 27, 1813—Perry wrote to Chauncey, "One of the brigs is completely rigged, her battery mounted; the other will be equally far advanced in a week. . . ."<sup>27</sup>

July 14, 1813—Perry promised Jones some time previously that the fleet would be ready about July 15.<sup>28</sup>

July 23, 1813—Perry wrote, "My vessels are all ready . . . Our sails are bent, provisions on board, and, in fact, everything is ready . . ."<sup>29</sup> Everything was ready except for the personnel to man the fleet. Perry begged Chauncey to send men as quickly as possible.

The vessels built and armed at Erie consisted of two brigs, one sharp schooner pilot boat, and three gunboats. To these were added four of the five vessels outfitted at Black Rock. The weights of the boats have long been under discussion and a guess can only be made of whose estimates are correct. The weights were estimated as follows:

	30	31	32	33
<i>Built at Erie</i>	<i>Oliver H. Perry</i>	<i>W. W. Dobbins</i>	<i>Noah Brown</i>	<i>Theo. Roosevelt</i>
Lawrence	260 tons		492 60/95 tons	480 tons
Niagara	260 tons		492 60/95 tons	480 tons
Ariel	60 tons	63 tons	75 tons	112 tons
Scorpion	60 tons	63 tons	60 tons	86 tons
Porcupine	50 tons	52 tons	60 tons	83 tons
Tigress	50 tons	52 tons	60 tons	96 tons

*From Black Rock*

Caledonia	85 tons	85 tons	180 tons
Somers	65 tons	85 tons	94 tons
Trippe	50 tons	63 tons	60 tons
Ohio		62 tons	
Amelia		72 tons	

From these listings it can be seen that William Dobbins and Perry agree quite closely on the weights. Noah Brown's figures must be discounted, at least for the smaller vessels, because it is definitely known that only the first two gunboats built were of the same size and the dimensions, for the third gunboat and the pilot boat were enlarged by Eckford on his visit to Erie on January 1, 1813. Where Roosevelt received his list of tonnages is not known, but neither can his estimates be accepted, inasmuch as his figure for the *Tigress* is the largest for the three gunboats, while Perry, Dobbins, and Brown all agree on the *Tigress* as being one of the smaller gunboats. However, there is close agreement on the number of cannon carried by the fleet. Daniel Dobbins gave a total of fifty-five, while Perry and Roosevelt report fifty-four guns for the vessels used in combat.

After the fleet had been constructed, outfitted, provisioned and manned, still other obstacles stood in the path of its contemplated action. The bar at the entrance of the bay had to be crossed. That, in itself, was a problem of difficult proportions, but coupled with the crossing was still another interference, which could have made it even more difficult.

Since the early days of July, Captain Barclay, commander of the British naval forces on Lake Erie, had kept a close watch on the work going on in the harbor. His fleet guarded the entrance of the harbor and maintained a vigilant blockade. Under this condition, exit from the harbor by the American fleet would have been impossible. Once the boats approached the bar the British could begin to fire and either damage or destroy the difficult achievement of ten months' back-breaking work. Providentially, Barclay either started to run low on provisions or accepted an invitation proffered to him by the town of Port Dover, Canada, for a dinner in his honor.<sup>34</sup> On July 31, he and the British fleet sailed away toward Canada. Barclay, at his court-martial after the battle, gave only a vague explanation for leaving Erie. Although suspecting a ruse, Perry nevertheless decided to chance the crossing of the bar.

Usually the depth of the water covering the bar was about six feet. Unfortunately, on August 1, the water level had fallen to between four and five feet. The *Niagara* and the *Lawrence* each had a draught

of nine feet. As a result, the bar was too shallow for the brigs by at least four or five feet. Provision, however, had been made for just this problem. Brown had constructed “. . . four camels about twenty tons each . . .”<sup>35</sup> to lift the brigs over the bar.

The camel [according to Lossing] is a machine invented by the Dutch for carrying vessels over shallow places. It is a huge box or kind of scow [fifty feet long, ten feet wide, and eight feet deep camels were used by Perry],<sup>36</sup> so arranged that water may be let in or pumped out at pleasure. One of them is placed on each side of a vessel, the water let in, and the camels so sunken that, by means of ropes under the keel and windlasses, the vessel may be placed so that [wooden] beams may bear it, resting on the camels. The water in the camel is then pumped out, they float, and the vessel, raised by them is carried over the shallow place.<sup>37</sup>

The day following Barclay's departure the crossings began. “At daylight on the first of August, the *Scorpion* and some of the other small vessels, by lightening and warping, were got over. . . .”<sup>38</sup>

They took up positions so as to be able to act as protection while the *Lawrence* was being brought over. The *Niagara* and another small vessel were positioned as near the bar as possible to enable them to fire, if necessary; additional cannon were mounted on sandy hills on the peninsula.

While the smaller vessels were crossing, the armament and any other removable gear was taken off the *Lawrence*. The camels were attached to her sides and the operation began.

By this process the brig was lifted quite two feet, though when she got on the bar it was found that she still drew too much water. It became necessary, in consequence, to cover up everything, sink the scows anew and block up the timbers afresh.<sup>39</sup>

With all the exertion we could make we were nearly two days in getting the *Lawrence* over . . . by renewed and most unparalleled exertions, the *Lawrence* was got into deep water at 9 or 10 A. M. [August 4] and at 12 M. [midnight] her guns were aboard, and she was ready for action.<sup>40</sup>

On August 5, the *Niagara*, with the employment of the camels, was safely brought over the bar. The task was not as difficult as had been experienced with the *Lawrence*, since the men had learned their lesson well on the use of a camel. By noon of August 6, all the vessels were safely across the bar and into the waters of Lake Erie. It had been a task of unimaginable difficulty. Champlin writes that during

this time there was "no sleep by all the officers and men except what could be gotten on deck".<sup>41</sup> The *Pittsburgh Gazette* thought so highly of the feat that, upon word being received from Erie, an extra edition was published.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, the fleet, that so shortly before had been trees in the forest or supplies in distant places, floated on Lake Erie ready to vie with the British for its control.

## VI

### CONCLUSION

The Battle of Lake Erie was fought about five weeks after the American fleet had left the bay at Erie. It was a short encounter, only a few hours in length. Yet the battle may be described as the turning point of the War of 1812. The consequences of the American victory and the British defeat were manifold. The communication and transportation lane, so vital to American strategy and planning in the Northwest frontier areas, was re-opened; a reconquest of territories lost early in the conflict could be effected; all British hopes of establishing an independent state in those lands were forever shattered; and, finally, the victory acted as a buoying agent to the nation's morale and brought forth a grim determination to prosecute the war with renewed energy and vigor.

"No battle of the war was more decisive, and yet the popular idea of the victory is in some respects so erroneous . . ." <sup>1</sup> especially in the evaluation of Perry and the achievements with his fleet. Roosevelt in his *The Naval War of 1812*, writes,

. . . the "glory" acquired by it most certainly has been estimated at more than its worth. Most Americans, even the well educated, if asked which was the most glorious victory of the war would point to this battle. Every schoolboy reads about him [Perry] if no other sea-captain; yet he certainly stands on a lower grade than either Hull or MacDonough and not a bit higher than a dozen others.<sup>2</sup>

The American fleet included more vessels, and though outmanned and outgunned by the British, the American fleet was capable of sending off a volley far larger than that of the British fleet.

Roosevelt continues with the opinion that, while the leadership and tactics employed by the Americans during the battle showed definite shortcomings, "it was greatly to our credit that we had been enterprising enough to fit out such an effective little flotilla on Lake Erie, and for this Perry deserves the highest praise."<sup>3</sup> In a footnote to the above statement Roosevelt added, "Some of my countrymen will consider this but scant approbation, to which the answer must be that a history is not a panegyric."<sup>4</sup> However, he has been joined by

others who see in the construction of the fleet a more arduous and dramatic feat than the battle which followed. Too, they have begun to measure Perry's stature and ability in the light of this preparatory work, not for the battle alone. "The chief fact which stands boldly in relief in the victory won by Perry is the creation and formation of a fleet with resources ludicrously inadequate," says Eaton.<sup>5</sup>

The result has been a new interpretation of the whole story of the Lake Erie operations during the War of 1812—an interpretation that takes into account the frontier area in which the fleet was built; the long distances over unimproved roads and dangerous waterways by which supplies were brought—many from newly developed industries in the settlements west of the Appalachians; the tireless effort and energy displayed by the imported workmen under most trying and rugged conditions; and the continuance of work in spite of the lack of an efficient communications system. Surely the construction of the Perry fleet comes to the fore as an outstanding achievement of the frontier and as a most important contribution to the history of our country.

## APPENDIX I.

### THE FIVE VESSELS FROM BLACK ROCK

It will be remembered that Elliott, second-in-command of the Upper Lakes, had chosen Black Rock as the site of the naval station for Lake Erie. The yard was located a short distance up the Scajaquada Creek, a creek which runs into the Niagara River about two miles north of Black Rock.

At the time Elliott established the yard there were five merchant vessels tied up along the shore. These were American vessels which had been forced to seek protection from the British naval forces who had complete control of the Lake. In October, 1812, Elliott in a sensational raid at Fort Erie, Ontario, captured two vessels from the British. However, he was able to get but one of them back to the navy yard. The other grounded and was destroyed. The six vessels were purchased for the government by Henry Eckford, and workmen were sent to convert and outfit the boats into armed vessels.

The yard was badly situated for two reasons. To get the boats into Lake Erie required sailing against a five to seven knot current in the Niagara River, which could be done only with favorable winds. Secondly, the yard was within range of the British artillery located across the Niagara River at Fort Erie. Thus, when workmen arrived from Sackett's Harbor and work was begun on the boats, the British bombarded the yard. Over half of the workers soon fled from Black Rock toward Sackett's Harbor or New York. Work on the vessels, after this occurrence, continued only sporadically.

On May 23, 1813, Perry and Dobbins left Erie in an open boat for Buffalo. Perry had been invited to take part in a forthcoming battle for Fort George, a British fort located where the Niagara River flows into Lake Ontario. If Fort George were captured, the British would find their positions all along the Canadian side of the Niagara untenable and would have to leave them. Fort Erie was one of these fortifications. Once it was in American hands, the vessels at Black Rock could be brought into Lake Erie without fear of an artillery barrage.

The next evening Perry and Dobbins arrived at Buffalo. Here Dobbins was ordered to collect men to sail the vessels back to Erie, while Perry continued on to General Dearborn's field headquarters. On May

27, Fort George was assaulted and quickly fell. As expected, the British destroyed their holdings and evacuated the whole Niagara River front. Perry immediately went to Black Rock to supervise the movement of the boats into Lake Erie.

Unfortunately, a strong west wind delayed any attempt to sail the vessels up the rapid currents of the Niagara for several days. But the time was not ill-spent, since Eckford was there with twenty-five carpenters, working to repair and make the vessels stronger. After a week's delay, Perry decided to wait no longer. From General Dearborn, he was able to procure two hundred men to assist in the moving of the ships.

On June 6, the five boats were taken into the Niagara, and tracking them into Lake Erie was begun. It was a task of great difficulty. For a week the two hundred soldiers plus sailors and numerous ox-teams struggled against the strong current. No sails could be used because the winds continued to blow in the wrong direction. By June 12, the short distance to Buffalo was completed. Here, all the stores and provisions from the naval station were loaded on the vessels for the trip to Erie.

On the evening of the thirteenth, the vessels sailed for Erie, but were forced to turn back by heavy head winds. The next evening, the fleet again sailed. The vessels crept along the shore, at all times fearing discovery by the British fleet. Near Dunkirk, the fears were realized. The British were sighted heading for the partially equipped boats of Perry's command. But good fortune and "Perry luck" intervened. A fog suddenly fell between the two fleets, and, though frequently separated by a distance of less than half of a mile, neither of the forces was able to see its opponent. However, it is related that a man standing on shore could observe the actions of both fleets. Perry received information in such a manner. Early on June 19, the American ships sneaked across the bar and into the harbor.

The fleet consisted of the following vessels:

Caledonia (a war prize) .....	built at Malden, Canada
Somers (formerly Catherine) .....	built at Black Rock
Trippe (formerly Contractor) .....	built at Black Rock
Ohio .....	built at Cleveland
Amelia (formerly Gen. Wilkeson) .....	built at Detroit

The last-named vessel was later condemned as unfit for combat.

## APPENDIX II

### THE LEGEND OF THE DU PONT POWDER TRAIN

In 1913 centennial celebrations of the Battle of Lake Erie were held in cities all along the Great Lakes. Communities on Lakes Superior, Michigan, Huron, and Ontario joined with those on Lake Erie to make the summer a most festive one. The *Niagara*, one of Perry's flagships, was raised from the depths of Misery Bay, Erie, to serve as the main attraction at each of the city celebrations. Erie, as one of the two major places connected with the fleet, opened the festivities at the beginning of July. A mammoth program was arranged. As a main feature, the E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Company re-enacted the "carrying of gunpowder to Perry's fleet".

A Conestoga wagon was leased in Lancaster and brought to Wilmington, Delaware. Here, gunpowder kegs similar to those used in 1813 were loaded on the wagon. Six powerful horses, drawing the wagon, then began the long trip to Erie. Four cavalry men from the United States Army, dressed in 1813 uniforms, escorted the wagon for "protection."

The wagon went to Philadelphia, then headed west. It followed, as closely as was possible, the old turnpike to Lancaster. From Lancaster the old Forbes military highway was followed into Pittsburgh. To Waterford, Route 19, much of which follows the old road to Erie, was used. At Waterford, the Old French Road was taken into Erie. After reaching the Public Dock, the kegs were unloaded and put aboard the *Niagara*. At each community along the route, celebrations were held and honor paid to the wagoners bringing the "powder to Perry". The re-enactment was a memorable and exciting thing, one of the high points in the summer-long commemoration.

Unfortunately, the original of the re-enactment seems never to have taken place. While research and investigation for this thesis was being made, it was natural to look for the historical facts upon which the 1913 journey was based. A day was spent at the Du Pont Company offices in Wilmington attempting to get the orders, correspondence, accounts, or whatever there was in their records concerning the trip. Co-operation of the highest degree was given in the search by Mr. Pierre du Pont, his secretary, Miss Margaret Kane, and one of her

assistants. All company records for the year 1813 were brought out. They included: The letter book of E. I. du Pont, the general ledger, the sales journal, the account book, the cash book, and a wagoner's record book. Each was studied thoroughly.

The results of the search were negative with regard to any substantiating records. Nothing whatever could be found to prove any shipment of gunpowder to Perry. It does seem probable that the Du Pont Company was approached to supply the powder. George Harrison, the naval agent at Philadelphia, wrote letters to the Company on March 24 and March 29, 1813. What they contained is unknown inasmuch as the letters are not in the records. However, from copies of the answers to Harrison's letters written by E. I. du Pont it is known that the matter under discussion was for a special project of the United States Navy. The time of this correspondence coincides with the period when Harrison's main work was supplying the fleet being built at Erie. From the content of the letter, dated March 29, 1813, it is safe to state that Harrison's orders were refused because of the pressure of the work already contracted.

Two facts found in a letter to Colonel George Bomford of the United States Army from E. I. du Pont do prove conclusively that Du Pont wagons were not sent to Pittsburgh and Erie. On November 17, 1829, while reviewing the gunpowder business from 1804 to the present, Du Pont wrote:

. . . The powder supplied for the Navy previous and during the war was manufactured at the Baltimore mills, also by Decatur at Frankford and at Belleville; and by Dr. Ewell at Washington, of the amount so manufactured we cannot form any idea.

In the same letter E. I. du Pont shows the record of sales of powder to the army and navy from 1804 to 1816. During that period Du Pont powder was sold to the navy only in 1808.

Basis for the 1913 journey was sought elsewhere. There is a well-known painting made by Howard Pyle in 1912. The title of the painting is "Carrying Gunpowder to Perry". It shows two Conestoga wagons being drawn through a small village with members of the cavalry riding on either side of the wagons. Upon the side of the one wagon completely shown in the painting is a sign—Du Pont Powder. The original is at present in the possession of the Du Pont Company.

Where Mr. Pyle received his information for the drawing is unknown. His correspondence with the company is silent about that point. The painting was used in 1913 on calenders advertising Du Pont products.

Thus it must be concluded that one of the best features and high spots of the Perry victory celebrations was without basis in fact; that there was no Du Pont powder train "carrying powder to Perry" in 1813.



# NOTES

## PREFACE

1. Duncan S. Ballantine, *U. S. Naval Logistics in the Second World War* (Princeton, 1947), I.
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## CHAPTER I

1. Samuel E. Morison and Henry S. Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic* (New York, 1942), I, 412.
2. Henry Adams, *History of the United States of America* (New York, 1891), II, 79ff.
3. The feeling of an easy and inexpensive victory is best shown in Clay's speeches in the House of Representatives and in the declarations made to the Canadians by the army leaders.
4. Adams, *op. cit.*, II, 295.
5. John B. McMaster, *A History of the People of the United States* (New York, 1921), III, 548.
6. Adams, *op. cit.*, II, 298.
7. This course of action decided upon was brought to light by General Peter B. Porter during the court-martial proceedings of Hull. Porter was present when the plan for building a fleet was abandoned.
8. The dispatch from the War Department, dated June 18, 1812, said that war would be declared that day.
9. Adams, *op. cit.*, II, 311.
10. At present, there is no definitive history of the War of 1812. However, the better histories are: Henry Adams, *History of the United States* (New York, 1891), II, III; John B. McMaster, *A History of the People of the United States* (New York, 1921), III, IV; Julius Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812* (New York, 1925); and Alfred T. Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relation to the War of 1812* (Boston, 1905), 2 volumes.
11. A copy of the surrender terms is found in the Dobbins Papers (in the Buffalo Historical Society).
12. The pass is still preserved in the Dobbins Papers. Next to Nichols' name is the notation "a Mason".
13. This statement is in the Dobbins Papers.
14. Samuel P. Orth, *History of Cleveland* (Cleveland, 1910), 304.
15. *Pittsburgh Mercury*, September 3, 1812.
16. Dobbins is usually given credit for being the first to break the surrender news at Washington. This can hardly be the case. According to the *Pittsburgh Commonwealth*, word of the fiasco reached Pittsburgh, Sunday evening, August 23, 1812, by a special messenger from Warren, Ohio, to the Pittsburgh postmaster, John Johnston. The message included instructions for forwarding the news to Washington. At this time Cass was reaching Cleveland and Dobbins was just getting to Erie. Also, Benson J. Lossing, *The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812* (New York, 1869), 293, says that Cass had a companion with him, one Samuel Hunting-

ton, who continued on to the Capital when Cass became ill at Mercersburg. Dobbins does say: "I arrived at Washington, the first person from Detroit after the surrender. . . ." This is correct.

17. Hamilton to Dobbins, September 11, 1812 (in the General Letters).
18. Hamilton to Dobbins, September 15, 1812 (in the General Letters).
19. The original commission is found in the Dobbins Papers.

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## CHAPTER II

1. The first census (1810) showed a population of 394. Ten years later the count had risen to 635. The two hundred floaters were sailors, wagoners, roustabouts, etc., who were engaged in the flourishing salt trade between Western New York and Pittsburgh.

2. A wonderful model replica of the village is on view at the Buffalo Historical Society Building. Buffalo was completely destroyed in December, 1813, by a British landing force.

3. John Melish, *Travels in the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1812), II, 312.

4. C. A. Urann, *Centennial History of Cleveland* (Cleveland, 1896), 30. It was not until after the war that an influx of immigrants occurred. By 1818 the population had tripled. Samuel P. Orth, *History of Cleveland*, *op. cit.*, 112.

5. Strangely enough, a local tradition claims that two of Perry's boats were built at Old Portage, about twenty miles up the Cuyahoga River. Both Orth, *op. cit.*, 305 and James Wallen, *Cleveland's Golden Story* (Cleveland, 1920), 25, relate the story. There is nothing to substantiate the tradition. The Navy Department through Franklin D. Roosevelt, acting Secretary of Navy, on July 29, 1913, wrote to W. R. Rose, "Nothing has been found to show that any of the fleet were built on the Cuyahoga river". Reprinted in *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 9, 1921. However, government vessels were being built on the Cuyahoga during the summer of 1813. A Captain Sholes writing to a John Barr says that the British fleet appeared off Cleveland on June 19, 1813, for the purpose of destroying "the Government boats then built and building in the Cuyahoga river." A storm drove the fleet away. This was reprinted in Charles Whittlesey, *Early History of Cleveland* (Cleveland, 1867), 442. It is quite probable that one of the ships, the *Ohio*, was built at Cleveland. It, however, did not participate in the Battle of Lake Erie.

6. Buck, Solon J., and Buck, Elizabeth H., *The Planting of Civilization in Western Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh, 1939), 221.

7. The 1810 census showed a total of 426; that of 1820 was 649.

8. Leland D. Baldwin, *Pittsburgh: Story of a City* (Pittsburgh, 1937), 146, estimates between six and eight thousand in 1814. James Riddle, *First Directory of Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh, 1815), 2, calculated nine thousand in 1815. The latter seems extremely high since the 1820 official census showed only a total of 7248.

9. Riddle, *op. cit.*, 4.

10. Estwick Evans, *A Pedestrious Tour of Four Thousand Miles. . . .*, reprinted in Reuben G. Thwaites, *Early Western Travels* (Cleveland, 1904), VIII, 248-49.

11. Laura G. Sanford, *The History of Erie County* (Philadelphia, 1891), 110.

12. The Dobbins Papers.

13. Simeon Dunn's *Diary*, partially published in the *Erie Daily Times*, April 6, 1913.

14. H. J. Huidekoper to James F. Clarke, April 6, 1846; quoted in Francis Tiffany and Nina M. Tiffany, *Harm Jan Huidekoper* (Cambridge, 1904), 182.
15. Noah Brown, *Statement of*, in the possession of a great granddaughter, Mrs. E. W. Johnson, published in the *Journal of American History*, VIII (January, 1914), 106.
16. *Crawford Messenger*, November 12, 1812.
17. Buck and Buck, *op. cit.*, 236.
18. Buck and Buck, *op. cit.*, 239-40.
19. Perry to Chauncey, April 10, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
20. Evans, *op. cit.*, 245. The best work on the whole subject of the keelboat is Leland D. Baldwin, *The Keelboat Age on Western Waters* (Pittsburgh, 1941).
21. Sanford, *op. cit.*, 183.
22. *Ibid.*, 252.
23. Reprinted in Buck and Buck, *op. cit.*, 237.
24. Sanford, *op. cit.*, 109.

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### CHAPTER III

1. The best biographical sketch of Dobbins can be found in the introduction of "The Dobbins Papers," edited by Frank H. Severance, Buffalo Historical Society *Publications*, VIII, 1905.
2. Correspondence between Dobbins and Reed on this particular subject is found in the Dobbins Papers.
3. Chauncey to Dobbins, March 11, 1814; and Captain Arthur Sinclair to Dobbins, November 17, 1815 (in the Dobbins Papers).
4. The contract was drawn up by Dobbins and Crosby, November 3, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers). Research in the various Buffalo libraries and in the Library of Congress yielded no further data on Crosby.
5. Dobbins to Lieut. L. Angus, December 2, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers).
6. G. W. Sheldon, "The Old Ship-Builders of New York," *Harper's Magazine*, LXV, July, 1882; *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1931), VI, 4-5; *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (New York, 1888), II, 299; Howard I. Chapelle, *The History of American Sailing Ships* (New York, 1935), 112-116, 128, 280; contain good biographical accounts of Eckford.
7. James F. Cooper, *A History of the Navy of the United States* (New York, 1856), II, 449.
8. Brown, *op. cit.*, 104, is the best biographical sketch available.
9. Chauncey to Jones, February 22, 1813 (in Captain's Letters). Noah Brown, *op. cit.*, 105, says he left February 14, 1813. However his wages, according to a copy of an official pay account, began March 2, 1813. That is exactly ten days from February 21. Therefore, Chauncey is probably correct.
10. Noah Brown, *op. cit.*, 105.
11. Dobbins to Chauncey (probably), March 14, 1813.
12. The two best biographies of Perry are Alexander S. Mackenzie, *The Life of Oliver Hazard Perry* (New York, 1900); and Charles J. Dutton, *Oliver Hazard Perry* (New York, 1935).
13. Chauncey to Perry, February 1, 1813, published in Alexander S. Mackenzie, *The Life of Oliver Hazard Perry* (New York, 1900), 125.
14. Secretary of Navy Jones to Perry, February ?, 1813. Published in Alexander S. Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, 126.
15. Huidekoper to J. F. Clark, April 2, 1835, reprinted in Tiffany and Tiffany, *op. cit.*, 183.

## CHAPTER IV

1. Hamilton to Dobbins, September 15, 1812 (in the General Letters); Dobbins to Chauncey, September 28, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers).
2. Elliott to Dobbins, October 2, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers).
3. Elliott to Chauncey, September 14, 1812 (in the Captain's Letters).
4. Dobbins to Elliott, October 11, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers).
5. Chauncey to Hamilton, December 1, 1812 (in the Captain's Letters).
6. Chauncey to Hamilton, January 1, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
7. Dobbins to Hamilton, December 12, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers).
8. Dobbins to Hamilton, December 19, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers).
9. Chauncey to Hamilton, January 1, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
10. From a list of employees found in the Dobbins Papers.
11. Dobbins to Chauncey, November 16, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers). Dobbins to Angus, December 2, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers).
12. Chauncey to Hamilton, January 1, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
13. A February 19th payment to George Stewart in Brown's Account of expenditures for the Navy Department reads "\$10.31 expense in Pittsburgh after six carpenters" (in the Dobbins Papers).
14. Chauncey to Jones, February 22, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
15. *Ibid.*
16. Brown, *op. cit.*, 105.
17. Chauncey to Jones, February 16, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
18. Jones to Harrison, February 20, 1813 (in the General Letters).
19. Jones to Tingey (Superintendent of Navy Yard), February 8, 1813 (in the Navy Yard Letters).
20. Brown to Chauncey, March 7, 1813 (in Chauncey's letter to Jones, March 19, 1813, in the Captain's Letters).
21. Chauncey to Jones, March 29, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
22. Perry to Jones, April 10, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
23. Jones to Chauncey, March 27, 1813 (in the Letters to Officers, Ships of War).
24. Jones to Harrison, March 18, 1813 (in the General Letters).
25. Perry to Jones, April 10, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
26. March 20 payment to John Palmer in Brown's Account (in Dobbins Papers).
27. Brown, *op. cit.*, 105.
28. Payments at several dates for blacksmith work is noted in Brown's Account (in the Dobbins Papers).
29. Chauncey to Jones, February 22, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
30. Brown, *op. cit.*, 105.
31. Brown's Account, (in the Dobbins Papers).
32. Jones to Harrison, February 20, 1813 (in the General Letters).
33. Brown's Account, (in the Dobbins Papers).
34. Dobbins-Crosby Contract, November 3, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers).
35. Jones to Harrison, March 18, 1813 (in the General Letters).
36. Dobbins to Angus, December 2, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers).
37. Brown, *op. cit.*, 106.
38. *Ibid.*, 106.
39. Brown's Accounts (in the Dobbins Papers).
40. Brown, *op. cit.*, 106.
41. *Ibid.*, 106.
42. William Paasch (contractor to raise the Niagara) in an interview in the *Erie Dispatch Herald*, March 16, 1913.
43. Contract for oars between Dobbins and John Greenwood (in the Dobbins Papers).

44. Dobbins to Chauncey, September 28, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers).
45. Dobbins to Hamilton, December 12, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers).
46. Brown's Account. Payment of \$43.59 for "steel and expenses for it from Meadville" (in the Dobbins Papers).
47. *Ibid.*
48. Chauncey to Jones, February 16, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
49. Brown, *op. cit.*, 106.
50. From the *Cleveland Herald*, August 25, 1860.
51. Brown's Account. The entry reads "expenses to Bellefonte after Iron".
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*
55. Pittsburgh *Commonwealth*, March 10, 1813.
56. Brown, *op. cit.*, 106.
57. Perry to Jones, June 24, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
58. Brown's Account (in the Dobbins Papers).
59. Chauncey to Jones, February 16, 1812 (in the Captain's Letters).
60. "The Niagara Keepsake," *The Journal of American History*, Jan., 1914, VIII, 27.
61. Brown, *op. cit.*, 105.
62. Mary and John Irwin to Dobbins, January 21, 1813 (in the Dobbins Papers).
63. N. Richardson to Dobbins, January 21, 1813 (in the Dobbins Papers).
64. Perry to Chauncey, April 10, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
65. Chauncey to Jones, June 8, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
66. Riddle, *op. cit.*, 141.
67. Pittsburgh *Commonwealth*, March 10, 1813.
68. From Simeon Dunn's Diary, partially published in the *Erie Daily Times*, April 6, 1813.
69. Chauncey to Jones, February 24, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
70. Jones to Harrison, March 1, 1813 (in the General's Letters).
71. Dobbins to Chauncey, January 28, 1813 (in the Dobbins Papers).
72. Perry to Chauncey, April 10, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
73. *Ibid.*
74. Perry to Chauncey, June 12, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
75. Perry to Jones, June 24, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
76. Jones to Harrison, July 14, 1813 (in the General's Letters).
77. Jones to Chauncey, July 14, 1813 (in the Private Letters).
78. Jones sent the order to Harrison on July 14 who probably received it the next day. If he were extremely fortunate, Harrison might have found the anchors and drivers on the same day. The journey, according to Jones' estimate, would take fifteen days, the anchors arriving in Pittsburgh about July 30 or 31. Another week would be consumed taking them to Erie. Thus, with ideal conditions, the anchors could not have been brought before August 6 or 7. The fleet began crossing the bar on August 1.
79. In the Dobbins Papers.
80. Perry to Jones, September 13, 1813, (in the Master Commandant's Letters), calculated the strength of the fleet at fifty-four guns.
81. Chauncey to Hamilton, September 23, 1812, and September 24, 1812 (in the Captain's Letters).
82. Chauncey to Hamilton, September 26, 1812 (in the Captain's Letters).
83. Jones meant forty 32 pounders. Probably an error in copying by a clerk.
84. Jones to Chauncey, February 2, 1813 (in the Letters to Officers, Ships of War).
85. Jones to Tingey, February 5, 1813 (in the Navy Yard Letters).

86. Jones to Tingey, February 15, 1813 (in the Navy Yard Letters).
87. The names of the men and the dates hired can be found in a series of letters from Jones to Tingey and Foxall in the Navy Yard Letters between February 15, 1813, and March 6, 1813.
88. Chauncey to Jones, February 16, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
89. Jones to Chauncey, March 27, 1813 (Letters to Officers, Ships of War).
90. Perry to Chauncey, April 10, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
91. Reprinted in the *Pittsburgh Mercury*, April 22, 1813.
92. Account for the job made by Dobbins (in the Dobbins Papers).
93. *Pittsburgh Mercury*, April 22, 1813.
94. Perry to Chauncey, April 10, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
95. Chauncey to Hamilton, September 24, 1812 (in the Captain's Letters).
96. Perry to Jones, July 15, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
97. From a Customs record for the Port of Erie (in the Dobbins Papers).
98. Perry to Dobbins, August 22, 1813, and other letters (in the Dobbins Papers).
99. Riddle, *op cit.*, 139.
100. Perry to Jones, April 21, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
101. *Pittsburgh Commonwealth*, March 10, 1813.
102. Clyde Kelly, *United States Postal Policy* (New York, 1931), 291.
103. Dobbins to Hamilton, December 12, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers).
104. Brown's Account (in the Dobbins Papers).
105. Contract is in the Dobbins Papers.
106. Contract—Dobbins and John Greenwood (in the Dobbins Papers).
107. Brown's Account (in the Dobbins Papers).
108. See Page 40.
109. Harm Jan Huidekoper to J. F. Clarke, April 6, 1846, printed in Tiffany and Tiffany, *op. cit.*, 182.
110. Baldwin, *op. cit.*, 138.
111. Jones to Harrison, March 9 and 15, 1813 (in the General Letters).
112. Brown's Account (in the Dobbins Papers).
113. Dobbins to (unknown) in Washington, January 22, 1822 (in the Dobbins Papers).

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## CHAPTER V

1. See Footnote 1, Page 29.
2. Paul Haworth, "The Battle of Lake Erie," Mississippi Valley Historical Society *Proceedings*, V (1913), 209, gives September 26 as the date. On September 28, 1812, Dobbins wrote to Chauncey reporting the beginning of work and the hiring of men. His rough draft of his bill to the Navy Department "to House Rent fire wood and Candles for forty two weeks . . ." etc. (also in the Dobbins Papers), begins with September 28, 1812. Allowing a couple of days for preliminary work, the date given by Haworth appears likely.
3. Dobbins to Angus, December 2, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers).
4. Dobbins to Hamilton, December 12, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers).
5. Dobbins to Hamilton, December 19, 1812 (in the Dobbins Papers).
6. Chauncey to Hamilton, January 1, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
7. Chauncey to Hamilton, January 8, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
8. Dobbins to Chauncey, January 21, 1813 (in the Dobbins Papers).
9. Chauncey to Jones, February 16, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
10. Brown's intelligence reported in letter of Chauncey to Jones, March 19, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).

11. Dobbins to Chauncey, March 11, 1813 (in the Dobbins Papers).
12. Chauncey to Jones, March 16, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
13. Perry to Jones, April 11, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
14. Chauncey to Jones, April 16, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
15. *Pittsburgh Mercury*, April 22, 1813.
16. Chauncey to Jones, April 23, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
17. *Crawford Messenger*, May 19, 1813.
18. Hambleton to Jones, May 24, 1813 (in the Officers' Letters).
19. A dispatch from Erie published in the *Crawford Messenger*, June 2, 1813.
20. Chauncey to Jones, May 29, 1813 (in the Captain's Letters).
21. Dispatch from Erie published in the *Crawford Messenger*, June 9, 1813.
22. *Pittsburgh Mercury*, June 10, 1813.
23. Perry to Chauncey, June 12, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
24. Brown, *op. cit.*, 106.
25. Perry to Jones, June 19, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
26. Perry to Jones, June 24, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
27. Perry to Chauncey, June 27, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
28. Jones to Chauncey, July 14, 1813 (in the Private Letters).
29. Perry to Chauncey, July 23, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
30. Perry to Jones, September 13, 1813 (in the Master Commandant's Letters).
31. William W. Dobbins (son of Daniel), *The Battle of Lake Erie* (Erie, 1913), 77.
32. Brown, *op. cit.*, 106.
33. Theodore Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812* (New York, 1882), 309.
34. The dinner invitation was the reason for leaving, according to Dobbins who said he received the information after the war (in the Dobbins Papers).
35. Brown, *op. cit.*, 106.
36. S. R. Brown, *Views of Lake Erie* (Troy, 1814), 3.
37. Lossing, *op. cit.*, 515.
38. Stephen Champlin to William W. Dobbins, June 17, 1860 (in the Dobbins Papers). Champlin was a cousin of Perry's and an officer in the fleet.
39. Perry to (unknown), August 5, 1813. Published in Roosevelt, *op. cit.*, 310.
40. Champlin to William W. Dobbins, June 17, 1860 (*loc. cit.*).
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Pittsburgh Gazette Extra*, August 8, 1813.

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## CHAPTER VI

1. Paul Haworth, "The Battle of Lake Erie," *Mississippi Valley Historical Society Proceedings*, V (1913), 209.
2. Roosevelt, *op. cit.*, 319.
3. Roosevelt, *op. cit.*, 328-29.
4. *Ibid.*, 329.
5. J. G. Eaton, "Perry's Victory on Lake Erie," *Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts*, VIII (1901), 179.



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